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VOLUME XXIII.

LIFE AND WORKS OF GOETHE

Life of Goethe

BY

George Henry Lewes

In Two Volumes

Volume I.

Edited by Nathan Haskell Dole

Boston
Francis A. Niccolls
& Company
Publishers

The Young Goethe at Sesenheim

Photogravure from the painting by Brockmann.

Life of Goethe

BY

George Henry Lewes

In Two Volumes

VOLUME I.

Edited by Nathan Haskell Dole

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Preface to the Third Edition

SINCE the last edition of this work was published, many volumes have appeared which it was necessary for me to go through, and from which I have gathered numerous fresh details of interest, though nothing that alters the main outlines of my narrative.

Among the new works there have been two regular biographies. The one by M. Mézières, entitled "W. Goethe, Ses œuvres expliquées par sa vie" (2 vols. Paris, 1872–3), is a barefaced reproduction of my work, with little added except the writer's own remarks, and an occasional extract from some French book. Yet while thus appropriating my labours, M. Mézières abstains from even the slightest indication of his indebtedness. When he borrows a passage from a French writer he is careful to avow it; he borrows my whole book, and ignores it. The only time he refers to me, is in a note on the Weimar theatricals. Nay, so careful is he to avoid acknowledgment, that having in one place to put forward a somewhat different view of the Frau von Stein from that which he finds in my pages, he attributes the opinion he combats to Carlyle, who has never printed a line on the subject. Yet it is on the strength of such performances that M. Mézières presents himself as a candidate for a seat in the French Academy — and is admitted.

Very different is the other biography, "Goethe's Leben und Schriften, von Karl Gödeke" (1 vol. 1874), a compact compilation by one thoroughly conversant with the original sources.

The Priory, August, 1875.

Preface to the Second Edition

THERE was, perhaps, some temerity in attempting a "Life of Goethe" at a time when no German author had undertaken the task; but the reception which my work has met with, even after the appearance of the biographies by Viehoff and Schäfer, is a justification of the temerity. The sale of thirteen thousand copies in England and Germany, and the sympathy generously expressed, not unmingled, it is true, with adverse and even angry criticism, are assurances that my labours were not wholly misdirected, however far they may have fallen short of their aim. For the expressions of sympathy, public and private, I cannot but be grateful; and I have done my best to profit by criticism even when it was most hostile.

I wish to make special mention of the assistance tendered me by the late Mr. Franz Demmler. Although a stranger to me, this accomplished student of Goethe kindly volunteered, amid many and pressing avocations, to re-read my book with the express purpose of annotating it; and he sent me several sheets of notes and objections, all displaying the vigour of his mind, and the variety of his reading. Some of these I was glad to use; and even those which I could not agree with or adopt, were always carefully considered. On certain points our opinions were diametrically opposed; but it was always an advantage to me to read criticisms so frank and acute.

The present edition is altered in form and in substance. It has been rewritten in parts, with a view not only of introducing all the new material which

several important publications have furnished, but also of correcting and reconstructing it so as to make it more worthy of public favour. As there is little probability of any subsequent publication bringing to light fresh material of importance, I hope that this reconstruction of my book will be final.

With respect to the use I have made of the materials at hand, especially of Goethe's Autobiography, I can but repeat what was said in the preface to the first edition; the "Dichtung und Wahrheit" not only wants the egotistic garrulity and detail which give such confessions their value, but presents great difficulties to a biographer. The main reason of this is the abiding inaccuracy of *tone*, which, far more misleading than the many inaccuracies of *fact*, gives to the whole youthful period, as narrated by him, an aspect so directly contrary to what is given by contemporary evidence, especially his own letters, that an attempt to reconcile the contradiction is futile. If any one doubts this and persists in his doubts after reading the early chapters of this work, let him take up Goethe's letters to the Countess von Stolberg, or the recently published letters to Kestner and Charlotte, and compare their tone with the tone of the Autobiography, wherein the old man depicts the youth as the old man saw him, not as the youth felt and lived. The picture of youthful follies and youthful passions comes softened through the distant avenue of years. The turbulence of a youth of genius is not indeed quite forgotten, but it is hinted with stately reserve. Jupiter, serenely throned upon Olympus, forgets that he was once a rebel with the Titans.

When we come to know the real facts, we see that the Autobiography does not so much misstate as understate; we, who can "read between the lines," perceive that it errs more from want of sharpness of relief and precision of detail than from positive misrepresenta-

tion. Controlled by contemporary evidence, it furnishes one great source for the story of the early years; and I greatly regret there is not more contemporary evidence to furnish more details.

For the later period, besides the mass of printed testimony in shape of Letters, Memoirs, Reminiscences, etc., I have endeavoured to get at the truth by consulting those who lived under the same roof with him, those who lived in friendly intercourse with him, and those who have made his life and works a special study. I have sought to acquire and to reproduce a definite image of the living man, and not simply of the man as he appeared in all the reticences of print. For this purpose I have controlled and completed the testimonies of print by means of papers which have never seen the light, and papers which in all probability never will see the light — by means of personal corroboration, and the many slight details which are gathered from far and wide when one is alive to every scrap of authentic information and can see its significance; and thus comparing testimony with testimony, completing what was learned yesterday by something learned to-day, not unfrequently helped to one passage by details furnished from half a dozen quarters, I have formed the conclusions which appear in this work. In this difficult and sometimes delicate task, I hope it will be apparent that I have been guided by the desire to get at the truth, having no cause to serve, no partisanship to mislead me, no personal connection to trammel my judgment. It will be seen that I neither deny nor attempt to slur over points which may tell against my hero. The man is too great and too good to forfeit our love, because on some points he may incur blame.

Considerable space has been allotted to analyses and criticisms of Goethe's works; just as in the life of a great captain much space is necessarily occupied

by his campaigns. By these analyses I have tried to be of service to the student of German literature, as well as to those who do not read German; and throughout it will be seen that pains have not been spared to make the readers feel at home in this foreign land.

The scientific writings have been treated with what proportionately may seem great length; and this, partly because science filled a large portion of Goethe's life; partly because, even in Germany, there was nothing like a full exposition of his aims and achievements in this direction.

The Priory, North Bank, Regent's Park, November, 1863.

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Book the First

1749 to 1765

Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
Die Lust zu fabuliren.

Hätte Gott mich anders gewollt,
So hätt' er mich anders gebaut.

Life and Works of Goethe

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE.

QUINTUS CURTIUS tells us that in certain seasons Bactria was darkened by whirlwinds of dust, which completely covered and concealed the roads. Left thus without their usual landmarks, the wanderers awaited the rising of the stars, —

"To light them on their dim and perilous way."

May we not say the same of literature? From time to time its pathways are so obscured beneath the rubbish of the age, that many a footsore pilgrim seeks in vain the hidden route. In such times it may be well to imitate the Bactrians: ceasing to look upon the confusions of the day, and turning our gaze upon the great Immortals who have gone before, we may seek guidance from their light. In all ages the biographies of great men have been fruitful in lessons; in all ages they have been powerful stimulants to a noble ambition; in all ages they have been regarded as armories wherein are gathered the weapons with which great battles have been won.

There may be some among my readers who will

dispute Goethe's claim to greatness. They will admit that he was a great poet, but deny that he was a great man. In denying it, they will set forth the qualities which constitute their ideal of greatness, and finding him deficient in some of these qualities, will dispute his claim. But in awarding him that title, I do not mean to imply that he was an ideal man; I do not present him as the exemplar of all greatness. No man can be such an exemplar. Humanity reveals itself in fragments. One man is the exponent of one kind of excellence, another of another. Achilles wins the victory, and Homer immortalises it: we bestow the laurel crown on both. In virtue of a genius such as modern times have only seen equalled once or twice, Goethe deserves the epithet of great. Nor is it in virtue of genius alone that he deserves the title. Merck said of him that what he lived was more beautiful than what he wrote; and his Life, amid all its weaknesses and all its errors, presents a picture of a certain grandeur of soul, which cannot be contemplated unmoved. I shall make no attempt to conceal his faults. Let them be dealt with as harshly as severest justice may dictate, they will not eclipse the central light which shines throughout his life. And without wishing to excuse, or to conceal faults which he assuredly had, we must always bear in mind that the faults of a celebrated man are apt to carry an undue emphasis. They are thrown into stronger relief by the very splendour of his fame. Had Goethe never written "Faust" no one would have heard that he was an inconstant lover, or a tepid politician. His glory immortalises his shame.

Let us begin as near the beginning as may be desirable, by glancing at his ancestry. That he had inherited his organisation and tendencies from his forefathers, and could call nothing in himself original, he has told us in these verses:

"Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur,
Des Lebens ernstes Führen;
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
Die Lust zu fabuliren.
Urahnherr war der Schonsten hold,
Das spukt so hin und wieder;
Urahnfrau liebte Schmuck und Gold,
Das zuckt wohl durch die Glieder.
Sind nun die Elemente nicht,
Aus dem Complex zu trennen,
Was ist denn an dem ganzen Wicht
Original zu nennen?"[1]

The first glimpse we get of his ancestry carries us back to about the middle of the seventeenth century. In the Grafschaft of Mansfeld, in Thuringia, the little town of Artern numbered among its scanty inhabitants a farrier, by name Hans Christian Goethe. His son, Frederick, being probably of a more meditative turn, selected a more meditative employment than that of shoeing horses: he became a tailor. Having passed an apprenticeship (not precisely that of "Wilhelm Meister"), he commenced his Wanderings, in the course of which he reached Frankfort. Here he soon found employment, and being, as we learn, "a ladies' man," he soon also found a wife. The master tailor, Sebastian Lutz, gave him his daughter, on his admission to the citizen-

[1] "From my father I inherit my frame, and the steady guidance of life; from dear little mother my happy disposition, and love of story-telling. My ancestor was a 'ladies' man,' and that habit haunts me now and then; my ancestress loved finery and show, which also runs in the blood. If, then, the elements are not to be separated from the whole, what can one call original in the descendant?"

This is a very inadequate translation; but believing that to leave German untranslated is unfair to those whose want of leisure or inclination has prevented their acquiring the language, I shall throughout translate every word cited. At the same time it is unfair to the poet, and to the writer quoting the poet, to be forced to give translations which are after all felt *not* to represent the force and spirit of the original. I will do my best to give *approximative* translations, which the reader will be good enough to accept as such, rather than be left in the dark.

ship of Frankfort and to the guild of tailors. This was in 1687. Several children were born, and vanished; in 1700 his wife, too, vanished, to be replaced, five years afterward, by Frau Cornelia Schellhorn, the daughter of another tailor, Georg Walter; she was then a widow, blooming with six and thirty summers, and possessing the solid attractions of a good property, namely, the hotel *Zum Weidenhof*, where her new husband laid down the scissors, and donned the landlord's apron. He had two sons by her, and died in 1730, aged seventy-three.

Of these two sons, the younger, Johann Caspar, was the father of our poet. Thus we see that Goethe, like Schiller, sprang from the people. He makes no mention of the lucky tailor, nor of the Thuringian farrier, in his Autobiography. This silence may be variously interpreted. At first, I imagined it was aristocratic prudery on the part of *von* Goethe, minister and nobleman; but it is never well to put ungenerous constructions, when others, equally plausible and more honourable, are ready; let us rather follow the advice of Arthur Helps, to "employ our imagination in the service of charity." We can easily imagine that Goethe was silent about the tailor, because, in truth, having never known him, there was none of that affectionate remembrance which encircles the objects of early life, to make this grandfather figure in the Autobiography beside the grandfather Textor, who *was* known and loved. Probably, also, the tailor was seldom talked of in the parental circle. There is a peculiar and indelible ridicule attached to the idea of a tailor in Germany, which often prevents people of much humbler pretensions than Goethe from whispering their connection with such a trade. Goethe does mention this grandfather in the Second Book of his Autobiography, and tells us how he was teased by the taunts of boys respecting his humble parentage; these taunts even

went so far as to imply that he might possibly have had several grandfathers; and he began to speculate on the possibility of some latent aristocracy in his descent. This made him examine with some curiosity the portraits of noblemen, to try and detect a likeness.

Johann Caspar Goethe became an imperial councillor in Frankfort, and married, in 1748, Katharina Elizabeth, daughter of Johann Wolfgang Textor, the chief magistrate (*Schultheiss*).[1]

The genealogical tables of kings and conquerors are thought of interest, and why should not the genealogy of our poet be equally interesting to us? In the belief that it will be so, I here subjoin it.

[1] The family of Textor and Weber (Textor being simply the Latinised form of Weber) exist to this day, and under both names, in the Hohenlohe territory. Karl Julius Weber, the humourous author of "Democritus" and of the "Briefe eines in Deutschland reisenden Deutschen," was a member of it. In the description of the *Jubilæum* of the Nürnberg University of Altorf, in 1723, mention is made of one Joannes Guolfgangus Textor as a bygone ornament of the faculty of law; and Mr. Demmler, to whom I am indebted for these particulars, suggests the probability of this being the same John Wolfgang, who died as Oberbürgermeister in Frankfort, 1701.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE TEXTOR FAMILY.

GEORG WEBER,
Citizen of Weickersheim, a small town in the Jaxt district, near Mergentheim.

WOLFGANG WEBER,
Councillor at Hohenlohe, and Director of the Chancery at Neuenstein; according to the custom of the time, translated his family name WEBER into Latin, and called himself TEXTOR.

JOHANN WOLFGANG TEXTOR,
Born at Neuenstein; until 1690, Vice Court Judge and President-Vicar at the Electoral Court of Justice at Heidelberg; afterwards Consul and First Syndic at Frankfort; died there Dec. 27, 1701.

CHRISTOPH HEINRICH TEXTOR, Councillor of Justice and Advocate to the Elector Palatine; died 1716.

JOHANN NICOLAUS TEXTOR, Colonel and City Commandant; married, 1737, a widow von BARCKHAUSEN, born von KLETTENBERG.

JOHANN WOLFGANG TEXTOR, born Dec. 12, 1693; died Feb. 6, 1771, as Imperial Councillor and Magistrate at Frankfort; married ANNA MARGARETHA LINDHEIMER, daughter of DR. CORNELIUS LINDHEIMER, Procurator of the Imperial Chamber of Justice at Wetzlar (born July 31, 1711; died April 15, 1783).

KATHARINA ELIZABETH, born Feb. 19, 1731; died Sept. 13, 1808; married Aug. 20, 1748, the father of the Poet, Councillor, GOETHE.

JOHANNA MARIA, born 1734; married Nov. 11, 1751, the druggist MELBER, in Frankfort.

ANNA MARIA, born 1738; married Nov. 2, 1756, the clergyman M. STARK, in Frankfort.

JOHANN JOST, born 1739; died Sept. 19, 1792, as Sheriff in Frankfort.

ANNA CHRISTINA, born Oct. 24, 1743.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE GOETHE FAMILY.

FRIEDRICH GEORG GOETHE,

Born Sept. 7, 1657, at Artern, in the county of Mansfeld, where his father was a farrier; from 1687 a citizen and tailor in Frankfort-on-the-Main; married first, ANNA ELIZABETH LUTZ, a tailor's daughter (died 1700); secondly, May 4, 1705, MRS. CORNELIA SCHELLHORN (born Sept. 27, 1668; buried March 28, 1754); died as keeper of the inn *Zum Weidenhof* at Frankfort; buried Feb. 13, 1730.

- JOHANN MICHAEL GOETHE, died 1733.
- JOHANN CASPAR GOETHE, born July 31, 1710; died May 27, 1782, as Imperial Councillor in Frankfort; married Aug. 20, 1748, KATHARINA ELIZABETH TEXTOR (born Feb. 19, 1731; died Sept. 13, 1808).
  - JOHANN WOLFGANG von GOETHE, born Aug. 28, 1749; died March 22, 1832, from July 13, 1788, lived with CHRISTIANE VULPIUS (died June 6, 1816); married her Oct. 19, 1806.
    - JULIUS AUGUST WALTHER von GOETHE, born Dec. 25, 1789, in Weimar; died as Privy Councillor, Oct. 28, 1830, at Rome; married April, 1817, OTTILIE von POGWISCH (died 1872).
      - WALTHER WOLFGANG v. GOETHE, born Feb., 1818.
      - WOLFGANG MAX. v. GOETHE, born Sept. 18, 1820.
      - ALMA v. GOETHE, born Oct., 1827, died 1844.
  - CORNELIE FRIEDRICA CHRISTIANE, born Dec. 7, 1750; died June 8, 1777, at Emmendingen; married Nov. 1, 1773, JOH. GE. SCHLOSSER (born 1739; died 1799, at Frankfort).
    - MARIE ANNA LUISE SCHLOSSER, born Oct. 28, 1774; died Sept. 28, 1811; married 1795, NICOLOVIUS, at Eutin (died 1839).
    - ELIZABETH KATHARINA JULIE SCHLOSSER, born May 10, 1777, died July 5, at Emmendingen.
  - HERMANN JACOB, born Nov. 26, 1752; died Jan. 11, 1759.
  - KATHARINA ELIZABETH, born Sept. 8, 1754; died Jan. 19, 1756.
  - JOHANNA MARIA, born March 28, 1756; died Aug. 9, 1759.
  - GEORG ADOLF, born June 14, 1760; died Feb. 16, 1761.

Goethe's father, who had studied law in Leipsic and practised it for awhile in Wetzlar, and had travelled in Italy, Holland, and France, so that in those days he appeared an exceptionally cultivated burgher, was a cold, stern, formal, somewhat pedantic, but truth-loving, upright-minded man. He hungered for knowledge; and, although in general of a laconic turn, freely imparted all he learned. In his domestic circle his word was law. Not only imperious, but in some respects capricious, he was nevertheless greatly respected, if little loved, by wife, children, and friends. He is characterised by Krause as *ein geradliniger Frankfurter Reichsbürger* — "a formal Frankfort citizen" whose habits were as measured as his gait.[1] From him the poet inherited the well-built frame, the erect carriage, and the measured movement, which in old age became stiffness, and was construed as diplomacy or haughtiness; from him also came that orderliness and stoicism which have so much distressed those who cannot conceive genius otherwise than as vagabond in its habits. The craving for knowledge, the delight in communicating it, the almost pedantic attention to details, which are noticeable in the poet, are all traceable in the father.

The mother was more like what we conceive as the proper parent for a poet. She is one of the pleasantest figures in German literature, and one standing out with greater vividness than almost any other. Her simple, hearty, joyous, and affectionate nature endeared her to all. She was the delight of children, the favourite of poets and princes. To the last retaining her enthusiasm and simplicity, mingled with great shrewd-

[1] Perhaps *geradliniger* might be translated as "an old square-toes," having reference to the antiquated cut of the old man's clothes. The fathers of the present generation dubbed the stiff coat of their grandfathers, with its square skirts and collars, by the name of *magister matheseos*, the name by which the Pythagorean proposition is known in Germany.

ness and knowledge of character, *Frau Aja* as they christened her, was at once grave and hearty, dignified and simple. She had read most of the best German and Italian authors, had picked up considerable desultory information, and had that "mother wit" which so often in women and poets seems to render culture superfluous, their rapid intuitions anticipating the tardy conclusions of experience. Her letters are full of spirit: not always strictly grammatical; not irreproachable in orthography; but vigorous and vivacious. After a lengthened interview with her, an enthusiast exclaimed, "Now do I understand how Goethe has become the man he is!"[1] Wieland, Merck, Bürger, Madame de Staël, Karl August, and other great people sought her acquaintance. The Duchess Amalia corresponded with her as with an intimate friend; and her letters were welcomed eagerly at the Weimar Court.[2] She was married at seventeen, to a man for whom she had no love, and was only eighteen when the poet was born.[3] This, instead of making her prematurely old, seems to have perpetuated her girlhood. "I and my Wolfgang," she said, "have always held fast to each other, because we were both young together." To him she transmitted her love of

[1] "Ephemeriden der Literatur," quoted in "Nicolovius über Goethe."

[2] A large portion of this correspondence has recently been published ("Briefwechsel von Katharina Elizabeth Goethe," 1871), and amply proves what, from private sources, I had been able to state in the text. The letters, both of the Duchess Amalia and the Frau Rath, are very amusing, very unrestrained, and extremely unlike any other correspondences between the court and the *bourgeoisie*. Indeed they are not unfrequently more like what one would expect to find two lively grocers writing to each other. There is a free and easy tone which the editor idealises when he says that "the wash of the Main is heard between the lines, and the vineyards look down on every sentence." It is interesting to see how every one at the court writes to her as "dear mother" and sends her all the gossip of the hour.

[3] Lovers of parallels may be reminded that Napoleon's mother was only eighteen when the hero of Austerlitz was born.

story-telling, her animal spirits, her love of everything which bore the stamp of distinctive individuality, and her love of seeing happy faces around her. "Order and quiet," she says in one of her charming letters to Freiherr von Stein, "are my principal characteristics. Hence I despatch at once whatever I have to do, the most disagreeable always first, and I gulp down the devil without looking at him. When all has returned to its proper state, then I defy any one to surpass me in good humour." Her heartiness and tolerance are the causes, she thinks, why every one likes her. "I am fond of people, and *that* every one feels directly — young and old. I pass without pretension through the world, and that gratifies people. I never *demoralise* any one — *always seek out the good that is in them, and leave what is bad to him who made mankind and knows how to round off the angles.* In this way I make myself happy and comfortable." Who does not recognise the son in those accents? The kindliest of men inherited his loving nature from the heartiest of women.

He also inherited from her his dislike of unnecessary agitation and emotion: that deliberate avoidance of all things capable of disturbing his peace of mind, which has been construed as coldness. Her sunny nature shrank from storms. She stipulated with her servants that they were not to trouble her with afflictings news, except upon some positive necessity for the communication. In 1805, when her son was dangerously ill at Weimar, no one ventured to speak to her on the subject. Not until he had completely recovered did she voluntarily enter on it. "I knew it all," she remarked, "but said nothing. Now we can talk about him without my feeling a stab every time his name is mentioned."

In this voluntary insulation from disastrous intelligence, there is something so antagonistic to the notori-

ous craving for excitement felt by the Teutonic races, something so unlike the morbid love of intellectual drams, — the fierce alcohol of emotion with which many intoxicate themselves, — that it is no wonder if Goethe has on this account been accused of insensibility. Yet, in truth, a very superficial knowledge of his nature suffices to show that it was not from coldness he avoided indulgence in the "luxury of woe." It was excess of sensibility, not want of sympathy. His delicate nature shrank from the wear and tear of needless excitement; for that which to coarser natures would have been a stimulus, was to him a disturbance. It is doubtless the instinct of an emotional nature to seek such stimulants; but his reason was strong enough to keep this instinct under control. Falk relates that when Goethe heard he had looked upon Wieland in death, "and thereby procured myself a miserable evening, and worse night, he vehemently reproved me for it. Why, said he, should I suffer the delightful impression of the features of my friend to be obliterated by the sight of a disfigured mask? I carefully avoided seeing Schiller, Herder, or the Duchess Amalia, in the coffin. I, for my part, desire to retain in my memory a picture of my departed friends more full of soul than the mere mask can furnish me."

This subjection of the instinct of curiosity to the dictates of reason is not coldness. There is danger indeed of carrying it too far, and of *coddling* the mind; but into this extreme neither Goethe nor his mother can be said to have fallen. At any rate, let the reader pronounce what judgment he thinks fit, it is right that he should at the outset distinctly understand it to be a characteristic of the man. The self-mastery it implies forms the keystone of his character. In him emotion was not suppressed, but subjected to the intellect. He was "king over himself." He, as he tells us, found

men "eager enough to lord it over others, while indifferent whether they could rule themselves" —

> "Das wollen alle Herren seyn,
> Und keiner ist Herr von sich!"

He made it his study to subdue into harmonious unity the rebellious impulses which incessantly threatened the supremacy of reason. Here, on the threshold of his career, let attention be called to this cardinal characteristic; his footsteps were not guided by a light tremulous in every gust, liable to fall to the ground amid the hurrying agitation of vulgar instincts, but a torch grasped by an iron will, and lifted high above the currents of those lower gusts, shedding a continuous steady gleam across the troubled path. I do not say he never stumbled. At times the clamorous agitation of rebellious passions misled him as it misleads others; for he was very human, often erring; but viewing his life as it disposes itself into the broad masses necessary for a characteristic appreciation, I say that in him, more than in almost any other man of his time, naked vigour of resolution, moving in alliance with steady clearness of intellect, produced a self-mastery of the very highest kind.[1]

This he owed partly to his father and partly to his mother. It was from the latter he derived those characteristics which determined the movement and orbit of his artistic nature: her joyous, healthy temperament, humour, fancy, and susceptibility, were, in him, creative, owing to the marvellous insight which gathered up the scattered and vanishing elements of experience into new and living combinations.

[1] "All I have had to do I have done in kingly fashion," he said: "I let tongues wag as they pleased. What I saw to be the right thing that I did."

CHAPTER II.

THE PRECOCIOUS CHILD.

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE was born on the 28th August, 1749, as the clock sounded the hour of noon, in the busy town of Frankfort-on-the-Main. The busy town, as may be supposed, was quite heedless of what was then passing in the corner of that low, heavy-beamed room in the *Grosse Hirsch-Graben*, where an infant, black, and almost lifeless, was watched with agonising anxiety — an anxiety dissolving into tears of joy, as the aged grandmother exclaimed to the pale mother: "*Räthin, er lebt!* — he lives!" But if the town was heedless, not so were the stars, if astrologers are to be trusted; the stars knew who was gasping for life beside his trembling mother, and in solemn convocation they prefigured his future greatness. Goethe, with a grave smile, notes this conjunction of the stars.

Whatever the stars may have betokened, this August, 1749, was a momentous month to Germany, if only because it gave birth to the man whose influence on his nation has been greater than that of any man since Luther, not even excepting Lessing. A momentous month in very momentous times. It was the middle of the eighteenth century: a period when the movement which had culminated in Luther was passing from religion to politics, and freedom of thought was translating itself into liberty of action. From theology the movement had communicated itself to philosophy, morals, and politics. The agitation was still mainly in the higher classes, but it was gradually descending to

the lower. A period of deep unrest: big with events which would expand the conceptions of all men, and bewilder some of the wisest.

It is not the biographer's province to write a history of an epoch while telling the story of a life; but some historical indication is necessary, in order that the time and place should be vividly before the reader's mind; and perhaps the readiest way to call up such a picture in a paragraph will be to mention some of the "notables" of that period, and at what points in their career they had arrived. In that very month of August Madame du Chatelet, the learned translator of Newton, the loving but hot-tempered "Uranie" of Voltaire, died in childbed, leaving him without a companion, and without a counsellor to prevent his going to the court of Frederick the Great. In that year Rousseau was seen in the brilliant circle of Madame d'Epinay, disputing with the Encyclopedists, declaiming eloquently on the sacredness of maternity, and going home to cast his newborn infant into the basket of the Foundling Hospital. In that year Samuel Johnson was toiling manfully over his English dictionary; Gibbon was at Westminster, trying with unsuccessful diligence to master the Greek and Latin rudiments; Goldsmith was delighting the Tony Lumpkins of his district, and the "wandering bear-leaders of genteeler sort," with his talents, while enjoying that "careless idleness of fireside and easy chair," and that "tavern excitement of the game of cards, to which he looked back so wistfully from his first hard London struggles." In that year Buffon, whose scientific greatness Goethe was one of the first to perceive, produced the first volume of his "Histoire Naturelle." Haller was at Göttingen performing those experiments on sensibility and irritability which were to immortalise him. John Hunter, who had recently left Scotland, joined Cheselden at the Chelsea Hospital. Mirabeau and Alfieri

were tyrants in their nurseries; and Marat was an innocent boy of five years old, toddling about in the Val de Travers, unmolested as yet by the wickedness of "les aristocrats."

If these names have helped to call up the period, we must seek in Goethe's own pages for a picture of the place. He has painted the city of Frankfort as one who loved it. No city in Germany was better fitted for the birthplace of this cosmopolitan poet. It was rich in speaking memorials of the past, remnants of old German life, lingering echoes of the voices which sounded through the middle ages: such as a town within a town, the fortress within a fortress, the walled cloisters, the various symbolical ceremonies still preserved from feudal times, and the Jews' quarter, so picturesque, so filthy, and so strikingly significant. But if Frankfort was thus representative of the past, it was equally representative of the present. The travellers brought there by the Rhine-stream, and by the great northern roads, made it a representative of Europe, and an emporium of Commerce. It was thus a centre for that distinctively modern idea — Industrialism — which began, and must complete, the destruction of Feudalism. This twofold character Frankfort retains to the present day (1853): the storks, perched upon its ancient gables, look down upon the varied bustle of Fairs held by modern Commerce in the ancient streets.

The feeling for antiquity, and especially for old German life, which his native city would thus picturesquely cultivate, was rivalled by a feeling for Italy and its splendours, which was cultivated under the paternal roof. His father had retained an inextinguishable delight in all that reminded him of Italy. His walls were hung with architectural drawings and views of Rome; so that the poet was thus familiar from infancy with the Piazza del Popolo, St. Peter's, the Coliseum, and other centres of grand associations.

Typical of his own nature and strivings is this conjunction of the Classic and the German — the one lying nearest to him, in homely intimacy, the other lying outside, as a mere *scene* he was to contemplate. Goethe by nature was more Greek than German, but he never freed himself from German influence.

Thus much on time and place, the two cardinal conditions of life. Before quitting such generalities for the details of biography, it may be well to call attention to one hitherto unnoticed, viz., the moderate elevation of his social status. Placed midway between the two perilous extremes of affluence and want, his whole career received a modifying influence from this position. He never knew adversity. This alone must necessarily have deprived him of one powerful chord which vibrates through literature. Adversity, the sternest of teachers, had little to teach him. He never knew the gaunt companionship of Want, whispering terrible suggestions. He never knew the necessity to conquer for himself breathing-room in the world. Thus all the feelings of bitterness, opposition, and defiance, which accompany and perplex the struggle of life, were to him almost unknown, and he was taught nothing of the aggressive and practical energies with which these feelings develop in impetuous natures. How much of his serenity, how much of his dislike to political agitation, may be traced to this origin?

That he was the loveliest baby ever seen, exciting admiration wherever nurse or mother carried him, and exhibiting, in swaddling-clothes, the most wonderful intelligence, we need no biographer to tell us. Is it not said of every baby? But that he was in truth a wonderful child we have undeniable evidence, and of a kind less questionable than the statement of mothers and relatives. At three years old he could seldom be brought to play with little children, and only on the condition of their being pretty. One day, in a neigh-

bour's house, he suddenly began to cry and exclaim, "That black child must go away! I can't bear him!" And he howled till he was carried home, where he was slowly pacified; the whole cause of his grief being the ugliness of the child.

A quick, merry little girl grew up by the boy's side. Four other children also came, but soon vanished. Cornelia was the only companion who survived, and for her his affection dated from her cradle. He brought his toys to her, wanted to feed her and attend on her, and was very jealous of all who approached her. "When she was taken from the cradle, over which he watched, his anger was scarcely to be quieted. He was altogether much more easily moved to anger than to tears." To the last his love for Cornelia was steadfast.

In old German towns, Frankfort among them, the ground floor of residences consists of a great hall where the vehicles are housed. This floor opens in folding trap-doors, for the passage of wine-casks into the cellars below. In one corner of the hall there is a sort of lattice, opening by an iron or wooden grating upon the street. This is called the *Geräms*. Here the crockery in daily use was kept; here the servants peeled their potatoes, and cut their carrots and turnips, preparatory to cooking; here also the housewife would sit with her sewing, or her knitting, giving an eye to what passed in the street (when anything did pass there); and an ear to a little neighbourly gossip. Such a place was of course a favourite with the children.

One fine afternoon, when the house was quiet, Master Wolfgang, with his cup in his hand and nothing to do, finds himself in this *Geräms*, looking out into the silent street; and telegraphing to the young Ochsensteins, who dwelt opposite. By way of doing something he begins to fling the crockery into the street, delighted at the smashing music which it makes, and stimulated by the approbation of the brothers Ochsen-

stein, who chuckle at him from over the way. The plates and dishes are flying in this way, when his mother returns: she sees the mischief with a housewifely horror, melting into girlish sympathy, as she hears how heartily the little fellow laughs at his escapade, and how the neighbours laugh at him.

This genial, indulgent mother employed her faculty for story-telling to his and her own delight. "Air, fire, earth, and water I represented under the forms of princesses; and to all natural phenomena I gave a meaning, in which I almost believed more fervently than my little hearers. As we thought of paths which led from star to star, and that we should one day inhabit the stars, and thought of the great spirits we should meet there, I was as eager for the hours of story-telling as the children themselves; I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisation, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was disagreeable. There I sat, and there Wolfgang held me with his large black eyes; and when the fate of one of his favourites was not according to his fancy, I saw the angry veins swell on his temples, I saw him repress his tears. He often burst in with 'But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does kill the giant.' And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue it on the morrow, I was certain that he would in the meanwhile think it out for himself, and so he often stimulated my imagination. When I turned the story according to his plan, and told him that he had found out the dénouement, then was he all fire and flame, and one could see his little heart beating underneath his dress! His grandmother, who made a great pet of him, was the confidant of all his ideas as to how the story would turn out, and as she repeated these to me, and I turned the story according to these hints, there was a little diplomatic secrecy between us, which we never disclosed. I had the pleasure of continuing

my story to the delight and astonishment of my hearers, and Wolfgang saw with glowing eyes the fulfilment of his own conceptions, and listened with enthusiastic applause." What a charming glimpse of mother and son!

The grandmother here spoken of lived in the same house, and when lessons were finished, away the children hurried to her room, to play. The dear old lady, proud as a grandmother, "spoiled" them, of course, and gave them many an eatable, which they would get only in her room. But of all her gifts nothing was comparable to the puppet-show with which she surprised them on the Christmas Eve of 1753, and which Goethe says "created a new world in the house." The reader of "Wilhelm Meister" will remember with what solemn importance the significance of such a puppet-show is treated, and may guess how it would exercise the boy's imagination.

There was also the grandfather Textor, whose house the children gladly visited, and whose grave personality produced an impression on the boy, all the deeper because a certain mysterious awe surrounded the monosyllabic dream-interpreting old gentleman. His portrait presents him in a *perruque à huit étages*, with the heavy golden chain round his neck, suspending a medal given him by the Empress Maria Theresa; but Goethe remembered him more vividly in his dressing-gown and slippers, moving amid the flowers of his garden, weeding, training, watering; or seated at the dinner-table where on Sundays he received his guests.

The mother's admirable method of cultivating the inventive activity of the boy, finds its pendant in the father's method of cultivating his receptive faculties. He speaks with less approbation than it deserved of his father's idea of education; probably because late in life he felt keenly his deficiencies in systematic train-

ing. But the principle upon which the father proceeded was an excellent one, namely, that of exercising the intellect rather than the memory. An anecdote was dictated, generally something from every-day life, or perhaps a trait from the life of Frederick the Great; on this the boy wrote dialogues and moral reflections in Latin and German. Some of these have been preserved and published; a glance at them shows what a mastery over Latin was achieved in his eighth year. We can never be *quite* certain that the hand of the master is not mingled with that of the child; but the very method of independence which the master throughout pursued is contrary to a supposition of his improving the exercises, although the style is certainly above what even advanced pupils usually achieve. Doctor Wisemann, of Frankfort, to whom we are indebted for these exercises and compositions, written during Goethe's sixth, seventh, and eighth years, thinks there can be no doubt of their being the unassisted productions of the boy. In one of the dialogues there is a pun which proves that the dialogue was written in Latin first and then translated into German. It is this: the child is making wax figures, his father asks him why he does not relinquish such trivialities. The word used is *nuces*, which, meaning trivialities in a metaphorical sense, is by the boy wilfully interpreted in its ordinary sense, as *nuts* — "*cera nunc ludo non nucibus*" — I play with wax, not with nuts. The German word *Nüsse* means nuts simply, and has no metaphorical meaning.

Here is one of his moral reflections. "Horatius and Cicero were indeed Heathens, yet more sensible than many Christians; for the one says silver is baser than gold, gold than virtue; and the other says nothing is so beautiful as virtue. Moreover, many Heathens have surpassed Christians in virtue. Who was truer in friendship than Damon? more generous than Alexan-

der? more just than Aristides? more abstinent than Diogenes? more patient than Socrates? more humane than Vespasian? more industrious than Apelles and Demosthenes?" Platitudes these, doubtless; but they are platitudes which serve many as the ripe maxims of maturity. They give us a notion of the boy being somewhat "old-fashioned," and they show great progress in culture. His progress in Greek was remarkable, as may be seen from his published exercises. Italian he learned by listening to his father teaching Cornelia. He pretended to be occupied with his own lesson, and caught up all that was said. French, too, he learned, as the exercises testify; and thus before he is eight, we find him writing German, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek.

He was, in fact, a precocious child. This will probably startle many readers, especially if they have adopted the current notion that precocity is a sign of disease, and that marvellous children are necessarily evanescent fruits which never ripen, early blossoms which wither early. *Observatum fere est celerius occidere festinatam maturitatem,* says Quintilian, in the mournful passage which records the loss of his darling son; and many a proud parent has seen his hopes frustrated by early death, or by matured mediocrity following the brilliant promise. It may help to do away with some confusion on this subject, if we bear in mind that men distinguish themselves by *receptive* capacity and by *productive* capacity; they learn, and they invent. In men of the highest class these two qualities are united. Shakespeare and Goethe are not less remarkable for the variety of their knowledge, than for the activity of their invention. But as we call the child clever who learns his lessons rapidly, and the child clever who shows wit, sagacity, and invention, this ambiguity of phrase has led to surprise when the child who was "so clever" at school, turns out a mediocre man; or,

conversely, when the child who was a dunce at school, turns out a man of genius.

Goethe's precocity was nothing abnormal. It was the activity of a native disposition at once greatly receptive and readily productive. Through life he manifested the same eager desire for knowledge, and was not in the least alarmed by that bugbear of "knowledge stifling originality," which alarms some men of questionable genius and unquestionable ignorance. He knew that if abundant fuel stifles miserable fires, it makes the great fire blaze.

"Ein Quidam sagt: 'Ich bin von keiner Schule;
Kein Meister lebt mit dem ich buhle;
Auch bin ich weit davon entfernt
Dass ich von Todten was gelernt.'
Das heisst, wenn ich ihn recht verstand:
'Ich bin ein Narr auf eigne Hand!'"[1]

In the summer of 1754 the old house was entirely rebuilt, Wolfgang officiating at the ceremony of laying the foundation, dressed as a little bricklayer. The quick, observant boy found much in this rebuilding of the paternal house to interest him; he chatted with the workmen, learning their domestic circumstances, and learning something of the builder's art, which in after years so often occupied him. This event, moreover, led to his being sent to a friend during the restoration of the upper part of the house — for the family inhabited the house during its reconstruction, which was made story by story from the ground

[1] An epigram, which may be rendered thus: —

An author boasting said: "I follow none;
I owe my wisdom to myself alone;
To neither ancient nor to modern sage
Am I indebted for a single page." —
To place this boasting in its proper light:
This author is — a Fool in his own Right!

upwards — and the event also led to his being sent to school.

Viehoff thinks that Germany would have had quite another Goethe had the child been kept at a public school till he went to the university; and quotes Gervinus to the effect that Goethe's home education prevented his ever thoroughly appreciating history, and the struggles of the masses. Not accepting the doctrine that character is formed by circumstances, I cannot accept the notion of school life affecting the poet to this extent. We have only to reflect how many men are educated at public schools *without* their developing a love of history or much sympathy with the masses, to see that Goethe's peculiarities must have had some other source than home education. That source lay in his character. Moreover, it is extremely questionable whether Goethe could have learned to sympathise with the masses in a school of one of the German imperial towns, where there could be no "masses," but only close corporations, ruled and ruling according to narrow and somewhat sordid ideas. From intercourse with the sons of Frankfort citizens, no patriotism, certainly no republicanism, was to be learned. Nor was the public teaching, especially the historical teaching, likely to counteract this influence, or to inspire the youth with great national sympathies. Those ideas had not penetrated schools and universities. History, as taught by Schiller and Heeren, was undreamed of. "When I entered at Tübingen in 1826," writes Mr. Demmler to me, "the university of Paulus, Schelling, Hegel and, in days of yore, of Melanchthon, Reuchlin, and Kepler, traditions were still surviving of the lectures of Rösler, professor of history. In one of them, as I was told by a fellow of the college who had heard it, the old cynical skeptic said, 'As regards the Maid of Orleans, I conclude she was a cow girl, and was, moreover, on a very friendly footing with the

young officers.' Another time he said, 'Homer was a blind schoolmaster and wandering minstrel, and I cannot comprehend the fuss that is made about his poems.'" If this was the man who instructed Schelling and Hegel (1790–94), we may form some estimate of what Goethe would have heard forty years earlier.

One thing, however, he did learn at school, and that was disgust at schools. He, carefully trained at home, morally as well as physically, had to mingle with schoolboys who were what most schoolboys are,—dirty, rebellious, cruel, low in their tastes and habits. The contrast was very painful to him, and he was glad when the completion of his father's house once more enabled him to receive instruction at home.

One school anecdote he relates which well illustrates his power of self-command. Fighting during school-time was severely punished. One day the teacher did not arrive at the appointed time. The boys played together till the hour was nearly over, and then three of them, left alone with Wolfgang, resolved to drive him away. They cut up a broom, and reappeared with the switches. "I saw their design, but I at once resolved not to resist them till the clock struck. They began pitilessly lashing my legs. I did not stir, although the pain made the minutes terribly long. My wrath deepened with my endurance, and on the first stroke of the hour I grasped one of my assailants by the hair and hurled him to the ground, pressing my knee on his back; I drew the head of the second, who attacked me behind, under my arm and nearly throttled him; with a dexterous twist I threw the third flat on the ground. They bit, scratched, and kicked. But my soul was swelling with one feeling of revenge, and I knocked their heads together without mercy. A shout of murder brought the household round us. But the scattered switches and my bleeding legs bore witness to my story."

CHAPTER III.

EARLY EXPERIENCES.

IT is profoundly false to say that "Character is formed by Circumstance," unless the phrase, with unphilosophic equivocation, include the whole complexity of circumstances, from Creation downwards. Character is to outward Circumstance what the Organism is to the outward world: living *in* it, but not specially determined *by* it. A wondrous variety of vegetable and animal organisms live and flourish under circumstances which furnish the *means* of living, but do not determine the *specific forms* of each organism. In the same way various characters live under identical circumstances, nourished by them, not formed by them. Each character assimilates, from surrounding circumstance, that which is by it assimilable, rejecting the rest; just as from the earth and air the plant draws those elements which will serve it as food, rejecting the rest. Every biologist knows that circumstance has a modifying influence; but he also knows that modifications are only possible within certain limits. Abundance of food and peculiar treatment will modify the ferocity of a wild beast; but it will not make the lion a lamb. I have known a cat, living at a mill, from abundance of fish food take spontaneously to the water; but the cat was distinctively a cat, and not an otter, although she had lost her dread of water. Goethe truly says that if Raphael were to paint peasants at an inn he could not help making them look like Apostles, whereas Teniers would make his Apos-

tles look like Dutch boors; each artist working according to his own inborn genius.

Instead, therefore, of saying that man is the creature of circumstance, it would be nearer the mark to say that man is the architect of circumstance. It is character which builds an existence out of circumstance. Our strength is measured by our plastic power. From the same materials one man builds palaces, another hovels, one warehouses, another villas; bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks, until the architect can make them something else. Thus it is that in the same family, in the same circumstances, one man rears a stately edifice, while his brother, vacillating and incompetent, lives for ever amid ruins: the block of granite which was an obstacle on the pathway of the weak, becomes a stepping-stone on the pathway of the strong.[1]

If the reader agrees with this conception of the influence of circumstances, he will see that I was justified in laying some stress on Goethe's social position, though I controverted Viehoff and Gervinus on the point of school education. The continued absence of Want is one of those permanent and powerful conditions which necessarily modify a character. The well-fed mastiff loses his ferocity. But the temporary and incidental effect of school education, and other circumstances of minor importance, can never be said to modify a character; they only more or less accelerate its development.

[1] The greatness or the smallness of a man is determined for him at his birth, as strictly as it is determined for a fruit, whether it is to be a currant or an apricot. Education, favourable circumstances, resolution, industry, may do much, in a certain sense they do *everything;* that is to say, they determine whether the poor apricot shall fall in the form of a green bead, blighted by the east wind, and be trodden under foot; or whether it shall expand into tender pride and sweet brightness of golden velvet. —*Ruskin*, "*Modern Painters*," iii. p. 44.

Goethe furnishes us with a striking illustration of the degree in which outward circumstances affect character. He became early the favourite of several eminent painters, was constantly in their ateliers, playing with them, and making them explain their works to him. He was, moreover, a frequent visitor at picture sales and galleries, till at last his mind became so familiarised with the subjects treated by artists, that he could at once tell what historical or Biblical subject was represented in every painting he saw. Indeed, his imagination was so stimulated by familiarity with these works, that in his tenth or eleventh year he wrote a description of twelve possible pictures on the history of Joseph, and some of his conceptions were thought worthy of being executed by artists of renown. It may be further added, in anticipation, that during the whole of his life he was thrown much with painters and pictures, and was for many years tormented with the desire of becoming an artist. If, therefore, Circumstance had the power of forming talent, we ought to find him a painter. What is the fact? The fact is that he had *not* the talent which makes a painter; he had no faculty, properly speaking, for plastic art; and years of labour, aided by the instruction and counsel of the best masters, were powerless to give him even a respectable facility. All therefore that Circumstance did in this case was to give his other faculties the opportunity of exercising themselves in art; it did not create the special talent required. Circumstance can create no talent: it is food, not nutrition: stimulus, not organ.

Other boys, besides Goethe, heard the Lisbon earthquake eagerly discussed; but they had not their religious doubts awakened by it, as his were awakened in his sixth year. This catastrophe, which, in 1755, spread consternation over Europe, he has described as having greatly perturbed him. The narratives he

heard of a magnificent capital suddenly smitten — churches, houses, towers, falling with a crash — the bursting land vomiting flames and smoke — and sixty thousand souls perishing in an instant — shook his faith in the beneficence of Providence. "God, the creator and preserver of heaven and earth," he says, "whom the first article of our creed declared to be so wise and benignant, had not displayed paternal care in thus consigning both the just and the unjust to the same destruction. In vain my young mind strove to resist these impressions. It was impossible; the more so as the wise and religious themselves could not agree upon the view to be taken of the event."

At this very time Voltaire was agitating the same doubts.

"Direz-vous, en voyant cet amas de victimes:
Dieu s'est vengé, leur mort est le prix de leurs crimes?
Quel crime, quelle faute ont commis ces enfans
Sur le sein maternel écrasés et sanglans?
Lisbonne qui n'est plus, eût-elle plus de vices
Que Londres, que Paris, plongés dans les délices?
Lisbonne est abîmée; et l'on danse à Paris."

We are not, however, to suppose that the child rushed hastily to such a conclusion. He debated it in his own mind as he heard it debated around him. Bettina records that on his coming one day from church, where he had listened to a sermon on the subject, in which God's goodness was justified, his father asked him what impression the sermon had made. "Why," said he, "it may after all be a much simpler matter than the clergyman thinks; God knows very well that an immortal soul can receive no injury from a mortal accident."

Doubts once raised would of course recur, and the child began to settle into a serious disbelief in the benignity of Providence, learning to consider God as the

wrathful Deity depicted by the Hebrews. This was strengthened by the foolish conduct of those around him, who, on the occasion of a terrible thunder-storm which shattered the windows, dragged him and his sister into a dark passage, "where the whole household, distracted with fear, tried to conciliate the angry Deity by frightful groans and prayers." Many children are thus made skeptics.

The doubts which troubled Wolfgang gradually subsided. In his family circle he was the silent reflective listener to constant theological debates. The various sects separating from the established church all seemed to be animated by the one desire of approaching the Deity, especially through Christ, more nearly than seemed possible through the ancient forms. It occurred to him that he, also, might make such an approach, and in a more direct way. Unable to ascribe a form to the Deity, he "resolved to seek him in his works, and in the good old Bible fashion, to build an altar to Him." For this purpose he selected some types, such as ores and other natural productions, and arranged them in symbolical order on the ranges of a music stand; on the apex was to be a flame typical of the soul's aspiration, and for this a pastille did duty. Sunrise was awaited with impatience. The glittering of the house-tops gave signal; he applied a burning-glass to the pastille, and thus was the worship consummated by a priest of seven years old, alone in his bedroom![1]

Lest the trait just cited should make us forget that we are tracing the career of a child, it may be well to recall the anecdote related by Bettina, who had it from his mother; it will serve to set us right as to the childishness. One day his mother, seeing him from

[1] A similar anecdote is related of himself by that strange Romancist, once the idol of his day, and now almost entirely forgotten, Restif de la Bretonne. — See "*Les Illuminés*," par Gérard de Nerval.

her window cross the street with his comrades, was amused with the gravity of his carriage, and asked, laughingly, if he meant thereby to distinguish himself from his companions. The little fellow replied, "I *begin* with this. Later on in life I shall distinguish myself in far other ways."

On another occasion he plagued her with questions as to whether the stars would perform all they had promised at his birth. "Why," said she, "must you have the assistance of the stars, when other people get on very well without?" "I am not to be satisfied with what does for other people!" said the juvenile Jupiter.

He had just attained his seventh year when the Seven Years' War broke out. His grandfather espoused the cause of Austria, his father that of Frederick. This difference of opinion brought with it contentions, and finally separation between the families. The exploits of the Prussian army were enthusiastically cited on the one side and depreciated on the other. It was an all-absorbing topic, awakening passionate partisanship. Men looked with strange feelings on the struggle which the greatest captain of his age was maintaining against Russia, Austria, and France. The ruler of not more than five millions of men was fighting unaided against the rulers of more than a hundred millions; and, in spite of his alleged violation of honour, it was difficult to hear without enthusiasm of his brilliant exploits. Courage and genius in desperate circumstances always awaken sympathy; and men paused not to ask what justification there was for the seizure of Silesia, nor why the Saxon standards drooped in the churches of Berlin. The roar of victorious cannon stunned the judgment; the intrepid general was blindly worshipped. The Seven Years' War soon became a German epos. Archenholtz wrote its history (1791); and this work — noisy with guard-room bragging and folly, the rant of a *miles gloriosus* turned *philosophe* — was

nevertheless received with enthusiasm, was translated into Latin, and read in schools in company with Tacitus and Cæsar.

This Seven Years' War was a circumstance from which, as it is thought, Goethe ought to have received some epic inspiration. He received from it precisely that which was food to his character. He caught the grand enthusiasm, but, as he says, it was the *personality* of the hero, rather than the greatness of his cause, which made him rejoice in every victory, copy the songs of triumph, and the lampoons directed against Austria. He learnt now the effects of party spirit. At the table of his grandfather he had to hear galling sarcasms, and vehement declamations showered on his hero. He heard Frederick "shamefully slandered." "And as in my sixth year, after the Lisbon earthquake, I doubted the beneficence of Providence, so now, on account of Frederick, I began to doubt the justice of the world."

Over the doorway of the house in which he was born was a lyre and a star, announcing, as every interpreter will certify, that a poet was to make that house illustrious. The poetic faculty early manifested itself. We have seen him inventing conclusions for his mother's stories; and as he grew older he began to invent stories for the amusement of his playfellows, after he had filled his mind with images —

"Lone sitting on the shores of old Romance."

He had read the "Orbis Pictus," Ovid's "Metamorphoses," Homer's Iliad in prose, Virgil in the original, "Telemachus," "Robinson Crusoe," "Anson's Voyages," with such books as "Fortunatus," "The Wandering Jew," "The Four Sons of Aymon," etc. He also read and learned by heart most of the poets of that day: Gellert, Haller, who had really some gleams of poetry;

and Canitz, Hagedorn, Drollinger, — writers then much beloved, now slumbering upon dusty shelves, unvisited except by an occasional historian, and by spiders of an inquiring mind.

Not only did he tell stories, he wrote them also, as we gather from a touching little anecdote preserved by Bettina. The smallpox had carried off his little brother Jacob. To the surprise of his mother, Wolfgang shed no tears, believing Jacob to be with God in heaven. "Did you not love your little brother, then," asked his mother, "that you do not grieve for his loss?" He ran to his room, and from under the bed drew a quantity of papers on which he had written stories and lessons. "I had written all these that I might teach them to him," said the child. He was then nine years old.

Shortly before the death of his brother he was startled by the sound of the warder's trumpet from the chief tower, announcing the approach of troops. This was in January, 1759. On came the troops in continuous masses, and the rolling tumult of their drums called all the women to the windows, and all the boys in admiring crowds into the streets. The troops were French. They seized the guard-house; and in a little while the city was a camp. To make matters worse, these troops were at war with Frederick, whom Wolfgang and his father worshipped. They were soon billeted through the town; and things relapsed into their usual routine, varied by a military occupation. In the Goethe house an important person was quartered, — Count de Thorane, the king's lieutenant, a man of taste and munificence, who assembled around him artists and celebrities, and won the affectionate admiration of Wolfgang, though he failed to overcome the hatred of the old councillor.

This occupation of Frankfort brought with it many advantages to Goethe. It relaxed the severity of

paternal book education, and began another kind of tuition, — that of life and manners. The perpetual marching through the streets, the brilliant parades, the music, the "pomp, pride, and circumstance" were not without their influence. Moreover, he now gained conversational familiarity with French,[1] and acquaintance with the theatre. The French nation always carries its "civilisation" with it, — namely, a café and a theatre. In Frankfort both were immediately opened; and Goethe was presented with a "free admission" to the theatre, a privilege he used daily, not always understanding, but always enjoying what he saw. In tragedy the measured rhythm, slow utterance, and abstract language enabled him to understand the play better than he understood comedy, wherein the language, besides moving amid the details of private life, was also more rapidly spoken. But at the theatre, boys are not critical, and do not need to understand a play in order to enjoy it.[2] A *Racine*, found upon his father's shelves, was eagerly studied, and the speeches were declaimed with more or less appreciation of their meaning.

The theatre, and acquaintance with a chattering little braggart, named Derones, gave him such familiarity with the language, that in a month he surprised his parents with his facility. This Derones was acquainted

[1] He says that he had never learned French before; but this is erroneous, as his exercises prove.

[2] Well do I remember, as a child of the same age, my intense delight at the French theatre, although certainly no three consecutive phrases could have been understood by me. Nay, so great was this delight, that although we regarded the French custom, of opening theatres on Sunday, with the profoundest sense of its "wickedness," the attraction became irresistible: and one Sunday night, at Nantes, my brother and I stole into the theatre with pricking consciences. To this day I see the actors gesticulating, and hear the audience cry *bis! bis!* redemanding a *couplet* (in which we joined with a stout British *encore!*); and to this day I remember how we laughed at what we certainly understood only in passing glimpses. Goethe's ignorance of the language was, I am sure, no obstacle to his enjoyment.

with the actors, and introduced him "behind the scenes." At ten years of age to go "behind the scenes" means a great deal. We shall see hereafter how early he was introduced behind the scenes of life. For the present let it be noted that he was a frequenter of the greenroom, and admitted into the dressing-room where the actors and actresses dressed and undressed with philosophic disregard to appearances; and this, from repeated visits, he also learned to regard as quite natural.

A grotesque scene took place between these two boys. Derones excelled, as he affirmed, in "affairs of honour." He had been engaged in several, and had always managed to disarm his antagonist, and then nobly forgive him. One day he pretended that Wolfgang had insulted him: satisfaction was peremptorily demanded, and a duel was the result. Imagine Wolfgang, aged twelve, arrayed in shoes and silver buckles, fine woollen stockings, dark serge breeches, green coat with gold facings, a waistcoat of gold cloth, cut out of his father's wedding waistcoat, his hair curled and powdered, his hat under his arm, and little sword with silk sword-knot. This little mannikin stands opposite his antagonist with theatrical formality; swords clash, thrusts come quick upon each other, the combat grows hot when the point of Derones's rapier lodges in the bow of Wolfgang's sword-knot; hereupon the French boy, with great magnanimity, declares that he is satisfied! The two embrace, and retire to a café to refresh themselves with a glass of almond milk.[1]

Theatrical ambition, which stirs us all, soon prompted Wolfgang. As a child he had imitated Terence; he was now to make a more elaborate effort in the style of Piron. When the play was completed he submitted

[1] To remove incredulity, it may be well to remind the reader that to this day German youths fight out their quarrels with swords — not fists.

it to Derones, who, pointing out several grammatical blunders, promised to examine it more critically, and talked of giving it *his* support with the manager. Wolfgang saw, in his mind's eye, the name of his play already placarded at the corners of the street! Unhappily, Derones in his critical capacity was merciless. He picked the play to pieces, and stunned the poor author with the critical jargon of that day; proclaimed the absolute integrity of the Three Unities, abused the English, laughed at the Germans, and maintained the sovereignty of French taste in so confident a style, that his listener was without a reply. If silenced, however, he was not convinced. It set him thinking on those critical canons. He studied the treatise on the Unities by Corneille, and the prefaces of Racine. The result of these studies was profound contempt for that system; and it is, perhaps, to Derones that we owe something of the daring defiance of all "rule," which startled Germany in "Götz von Berlichingen."

CHAPTER IV.

VARIOUS STUDIES.

At length, June, 1761, the French quitted Frankfort; and studies were seriously resumed. Mathematics, music, and drawing were commenced under paternal superintendence. For mathematics Wolfgang had no aptitude; for music little; he learned to play on the harpsichord, and subsequently on the violoncello, but he never attained any proficiency. Drawing continued through life a pleasant exercise.

Left now to the calm of uninterrupted studies, he made gigantic strides. Even the hours of recreation were filled with some useful occupation. He added English to his polyglot store; and to keep up his several languages, he invented a Romance, wherein six or seven brothers and sisters scattered over the world corresponded with each other. The eldest describes in good German all the incidents of his travels; his sister answers in womanly style with short sharp sentences, and nothing but full stops, much as "Siegwart" was afterward written. Another brother studies theology, and therefore writes in Latin, with postcripts in Greek. A third and a fourth, clerks at Hamburg and Marseilles, take English and French; Italian is given to a musician; while the youngest, who remains at home, writes in Jew-German. This romance led him to a more accurate study of geography. Having placed his characters in various parts of the globe, he was not satisfied till he had a distinct idea of these localities, so that the objects and events should be consonant with

probability. While trying to master the strange dialect — Jew-German — he was led to the study of Hebrew. As the original language of the Old Testament this seemed to him an indispensable acquisition. His father consented to give him a Hebrew master; and although he attained no scholarship in that difficult language, yet the reading, translating, and committing to memory of various parts of the Bible brought out the meaning more vividly before him; as every one will understand who compares the lasting effect produced by the laborious school reading of Sallust and Livy with the facile reading of Robertson and Hume. The Bible made a profound impression upon him. To a boy of his constitutional reflectiveness, the severe study of this book could not fail to exercise a deep and permeating influence; nor, at the same time, in one so accustomed to think for himself, could it fail to awaken certain doubts. "The contradiction," he says, "between the actual or possible, and tradition, forcibly arrested me. I often posed my tutors with the sun standing still on Gideon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; not to mention other incongruities and impossibilities. All my doubts were now awakened, as in order to master the Hebrew I studied the literal version by Schmidt, printed under the text."

One result of these Hebrew studies was a Biblical poem on Joseph and his brethren; which he dictated to a poor half idiot who lived in his father's house, and who had a mania for copying or writing under dictation. Goethe soon found the process of dictation of great service; and through life it continued to be his favourite mode of composition. All his best thoughts and expressions, he says, came to him while walking; he could do nothing seated.

To these multifarious studies in Literature must be added multifarious studies of Life. The old Frankfort city with its busy crowds, its fairs, its mixed population,

and its many sources of excitement, offered great temptations, and great pasture to so desultory a genius. This is perhaps a case wherein Circumstance may be seen influencing the direction of Character. A boy of less impressionable nature, of less many-sided curiosity, would have lived in such a city undisturbed; some eyes would see little of the variety, some minds would be unsolicited by the exciting objects. But Goethe's desultory, because impulsive, nature found continual excitement in fresh objects; and he was thus led to study many things, to grasp at many forms of life, instead of concentrating himself upon a few. A large continuity of thought and effort was perhaps radically uncongenial to such a temperament; yet one cannot help speculating whether under other circumstances he might not have achieved it. Had he been reared in a quiet little old German town, where he would have daily seen the same faces in the silent streets, and come in contact with the same characters, his culture might have been less various, but it might perhaps have been deeper. Had he been reared in the country, with only the changing seasons and the sweet serenities of Nature to occupy his attention when released from study, he would certainly have been a different poet. The long summer afternoons spent in lonely rambles, the deepening twilights filled with shadowy visions, the slow uniformity of his external life necessarily throwing him more and more upon the subtle diversities of inward experience, would inevitably have influenced his genius in quite different directions, would have animated his works with a very different spirit. Yet who shall say that to him this would have been all gain? Who shall say that it would not have been a loss? For such an organisation as his the life he led was perhaps the very best. He was desultory, and the varieties of objects which solicited his attention, while they helped to encourage that tendency, also

helped to nourish his mind with images such as afterward became the richest material for his art.

At any rate, it is idle to speculate on what would have been; we must concern ourselves with what was. The boy saw much of life, in the lower as in the upper classes. He passed from the society of the Count de Thorane, and of the artists whom the count assembled round him (from whom the boy learnt something of the technical details of painting), to the society of the Jews in the strange, old, filthy, but deeply interesting *Judengasse;* or to that of various artisans, in whose shops his curiosity found perpetual food. The Jews were doubly interesting to him: as social pariahs, over whom there hovered a mingled mystery of terror and contempt, and as descendants of the Chosen People, who preserved the language, the opinions, and many of the customs of the old Biblical race. He was impressed by their adherence to old customs; by their steadfastness and courageous activity; by their strange features and accents, by their bright cleverness and good nature. The pretty Jewish maidens, also, smiled agreeably upon him. He began to mingle with them; managed to get permission to attend some of their ceremonies; and attended their schools. As to artisans, he was all his life curious about their handicrafts, and fond of being admitted into their family circles. Scott himself was not fonder of talking to one; nor did Scott make better use of such manifold experience. Frederika's sister told a visitor that Goethe knew several handicrafts, and had even learned basket-making from a lame man in Sesenheim. Here in Frankfort the boy was welcome in many a shop. The jeweller, Lautensack, gladly admitted him to witness the mysteries of his art, while he made the bouquet of jewels for the Kaiser, or a diamond snuff-box which Rath Goethe had ordered as a present for his wife; the boy eagerly questioning him respecting precious stones, and the engrav-

ings which the jeweller possessed. Nothnagel, the painter, had established an oilcloth manufactory; and the boy not only learned all the processes, but lent a helping hand.

Besides these forms of life, there were others whose influence must not be overlooked; one of these brings before us the Fräulein von Klettenberg, of whom we first get a glimpse in connection with his confirmation, which took place at this period, 1763. The readers of "Wilhelm Meister" are familiar with this gentle and exquisite character, where she is represented in the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul,"[1] In the "Confessions" we see that the "piety" and retirement are represented less as the consequences of evangelical illumination than of moral serenity and purity shrinking from contact with a world of which it has been her fate to see the coarsest features. The real Fräulein von Klettenberg it is perhaps now impossible to separate from the ideal so beautifully painted by Goethe. On him her influence was avowedly very great, both at this period and subsequently. It was not so much the effect of religious discussion, as the experience it gave him of a deeply religious nature. She was neither bigot nor prude. Her faith was an inner light which shed mild radiance around her.[2] Moved by her influence, he wrote a series of "Religious Odes," after the fashion of that day, and greatly pleased his father by presenting them copied neatly in a quarto volume. His father begged that every year he would present him with such a volume.

[1] Or as we in England, following Carlyle, have been misled into calling it, the "Confessions of a Fair Saint." The *schöne Seele — une belle âme*, was one of the favourite epithets of the last century. Goethe applies it to Klopstock, who was neither "saint nor fair."

[2] In Varnhagen von Ense's "Vermischte Schriften" (vol. iii. p. 33) the reader will find a few significant details respecting this remarkable person, and some of her poems.

A very different sort of female influence has now to be touched on. His heart began to flutter with the emotions of love. He was not quite fifteen, when Gretchen, the sister of one of his disreputable companions, first set his youthful pulses throbbing to the movements of the divine passion. The story is told in a rambling way in the Autobiography, and may here be very briefly dismissed. He had often turned his poetical talents to *practical* purposes, namely, writing wedding and funeral verses, the money produce of which went in joyous feastings. In these he was almost daily thrown with Gretchen; but she, though kind, treated him as a child, and never permitted the slightest familiarity. A merry life they led, in picnics and pleasure bouts; and the coronation of the Kaiser Joseph II. was the occasion of increased festivities. One night, after the fatigues of a sightseeing day, the hours rolled unheeded over these thoughtless merry heads, and the stroke of midnight startled them. To his dismay, Wolfgang found he had forgotten the door-key with which hitherto he had been able to evade paternal knowledge of his late hours. Gretchen proposed that they should all remain together, and pass the night in conversation. This was agreed on. But, as in all such cases, the effort was vain. Fatigue weighed down their eyelids; conversation became feebler and feebler; two strangers already slumbered in corners of the room; one friend sat in a corner with his betrothed, her head reposing on his shoulder; another, crossing his arms upon the table, rested his head upon them — and snored. The noisy room had become silent. Gretchen and her lover sat by the window talking in undertones. Fatigue at length conquered her also, and drooping her head upon his shoulder, she too slept. With tender pride he supported that delicious burden, till like the rest he gave way, and slept.

It was broad day when he awoke. Gretchen was standing before a mirror arranging her cap. She smiled on him more amiably than ever she had smiled before; and pressed his hand tenderly as he departed. But now, while he seemed drawing nearer to her, the dénouement was at hand. Some of the joyous companions had been guilty of nefarious practices, such as forgeries of documents. His friend and Gretchen were involved in the accusation, though falsely. Wolfgang had to undergo a severe investigation, which, as he was perfectly innocent, did not much afflict him; but an affliction came out of the investigation, for Gretchen, in her deposition concerning him, said, "I will not deny that I have often seen him, and seen him with pleasure, but I treated him as a child, and my affection for him was merely that of a sister." His exasperation may be imagined. A boy aspiring to the dignity of manhood knows few things more galling than to be treated as a boy by the girl whom he has honoured with his homage. He suffered greatly at this destruction of his romance: nightly was his pillow wet with tears; food became repugnant to him; life, he thought, had no longer an object.

But pride came to his aid; pride and that volatility of youth, which compensates for extra-sensitiveness by extra-facility in forgetting. He threw himself into study, especially of philosophy, under guidance of a tutor, a sort of *Wagner* to the young *Faust*. This tutor, who preferred dusty quartos to all the landscapes in the world, used to banter him upon being a true German, such as Tacitus describes, avid of the emotions excited by solitude and scenery. Laughter weaned him not from the enjoyment. He was enjoying his first sorrow: the luxury of melancholy, the romance of a forlorn existence, drove him into solitude. Like Bellerophon, he fed upon his own heart, away from the haunts of men. He made frequent walking

excursions. Those mountains which from earliest childhood had stood so distant, "haunting him like a passion," were now his favourite resorts. He visited Homburg, Kronburg, Königstein, Wiesbaden, Schwalbach, Biberich. These filled his mind with lovely images.

Severer studies were not neglected. To please his father he was diligent in application to jurisprudence; to please himself he was still more diligent in literature; Morhof's "Polyhistor," Gessner's "Isagoge," and Bayle's Dictionary, filled him with the ambition to become a University professor. Herein, as, indeed, throughout his career, we see the strange impressibility of his nature, which, like the fabled chameleon, takes its colour from every tree it lies under.

The melancholy fit did not last long. And he again felt a fluttering of the heart in the society of Charity Meixner, one of his sister's friends, of whom we shall catch another glimpse during his stay at Leipsic. A circle of lively friends, among them Horn, of whom we shall hear more anon, drew him into gaiety again. Their opinion of his talents appears to have been enormous; their love for him, and interest in all he did, was of the kind which followed him through life. No matter what his mood — in the wildest student-period, in the startling genius-period, and in the diplomatic-period — whatever offence his manner created, was soon forgotten in the irresistible fascination of his nature. The secret of that fascination was his own overflowing lovingness, and his genuine interest in every individuality, however opposite to his own.

With these imperfect glances at his early career we close this book, on his departure from home for the University of Leipsic. Before finally quitting this period, we may take a survey of the *characteristics* it exhibits, as some guide in our future inquiries.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN.

As in the soft round lineaments of childhood we trace the features which after years will develop into more decided forms, so in the moral lineaments of the Child may be traced the characteristics of the Man. But an apparent solution of continuity takes place in the transition period, and the Youth is in many respects unlike what he has been in childhood, and what he will be in maturity. In youth, when the passions begin to stir, the character is made to swerve from the orbit previously traced. Passion rules the hour. Thus we often see the prudent child turn out an extravagant youth; but he crystallises once more into prudence, as he hardens with age.

This was certainly the case with Goethe, who, if he had died young, like Shelley or Keats, would have left a name among the most *genial*, not to say extravagant of poets; but, who, living to the age of eighty-two, had fifty years of crystallisation to acquire a definite figure which perplexes critics. In his childhood, scanty as the details are which enable us to reconstruct it, we see the main features of the man.

And first of his *manysidedness*. Seldom has a boy exhibited such variety of tendencies. The multiplied activity of his life is prefigured in the varied tendencies of his childhood. We see him as an orderly, somewhat formal, inquisitive, reasoning, deliberative child, a precocious learner, an omnivorous reader, and a vigorous logician who thinks for himself; so independent, that

at six years of age he doubts the beneficence of the Creator, and at seven, doubts the competence and justice of the world's judgment. He is inventive, poetical, proud, loving, volatile, with a mind open to all influences, swayed by every gust, and yet, while thus swayed as to the direction of his activity, master over that activity. The most diverse characters, the most antagonistic opinions interest him. He is very studious: no bookworm more so; alternately busy with languages, mythology, antiquities, law, philosophy, poetry, and religion; yet he joins in all festive scenes, gets familiar with life in various forms, and stays out late o' nights. He is also troubled by melancholy, dreamy moods forcing him ever and anon into solitude.

Among the dominant characteristics, however, are seriousness, formality, rationality. He is by no means a naughty boy. He gives his parents no tremulous anxiety as to "what will become of him." He seems very much master of himself. It is this which in later years perplexed his critics, who could not reconcile this appearance of self-mastery, this absence of expressed enthusiasm, with their conceptions of a poet. Assuredly he had enthusiasm, if ever man had it: at least, if enthusiasm (being "full of the God") means being filled with a sublime idea, and by its light working steadily. He had little of the other kind of enthusiasm — that insurrection of the feelings carrying away upon their triumphant shoulders the Reason which has no longer power to guide them. And hence it is that whereas the quality which first strikes us in most poets is Emotion, with its caprices, infirmities, and generous errors; the first quality which strikes us in Goethe — the Child and Man, but *not* the Youth — is Intellect, with its clearness and calmness. He has also a provoking immunity from error. I say *provoking*, for we all gladly overlook the errors of enthusiasm: some, because these errors appeal to compassion; and

some, because these errors establish a community of impulse between the sinner and ourselves, forming, as it were, broken edges which show us where to look for support — scars which tell of wounds we have escaped. But we are pitiless to the cold prudence which shames our weakness and asks no alms from our charity. Why do we all preach Prudence, and secretly dislike it? Perhaps, because we dimly feel that life without its generous errors might want its lasting enjoyments; and thus the very mistakes which arise from an imprudent, unreflecting career are absolved by that instinct which suggests other aims for existence beyond prudential aims. This is one reason why the erring lives of Genius command such deathless sympathy.

Having indicated so much, I may now ask those who are distressed by the calm, self-sustaining superiority of Goethe in old age, whether, on deeper reflection, they cannot reconcile it with their conceptions of the poet's nature? We admire Rationality, but we sympathise with Sensibility. Our dislike of the one arises from its supposed incompatibility with the other. But if a man unites the mastery of Will and Intellect to the profoundest sensibility of Emotion, shall we not say of him that he has in living synthesis vindicated both what we preach and what we love? That Goethe united these will be abundantly shown in this biography. In the chapters about to follow we shall see him wild, restless, aimless, erring, and extravagant enough to satisfy the most ardent admirer of the vagabond nature of genius: the Child and the Man will at times be scarcely traceable in the Youth.

One trait must not be passed over, namely, his want of patience, which, while it prevented his ever thoroughly mastering the technique of any one subject, lay at the bottom of his multiplied activity in directions so opposed to each other. He was excessively impressible, caught the impulse from every surrounding

influence, and was thus never constant to one thing, because his susceptibility was connected with an impatience which soon made him weary. There are men who learn many languages, and never thoroughly master the grammar of one. Of these was Goethe. Easily excited to throw his energy in a new direction, he had not the patience which begins at the beginning and rises gradually, slowly into assured mastery. Like an eagle he swooped down upon his prey; he could not watch for it, with cat-like patience. It is to this impatience we must attribute the fact of so many works being left fragments, so many composed by snatches during long intervals. "Prometheus," "Mahomet," "Die Natürliche Tochter," "Elpenor," "Achilleis," "Nausikäa," remain fragments. "Faust," "Egmont," "Tasso," "Iphigenia," "Meister," were many years in hand. Whatever could be done in a few days — while the impulse lasted — was done; longer works were spread over a series of years.

Book the Second

1765 to 1771

"In grossen Städten lernen früh
Die jüngsten Knaben was;
Denn manche Bücher lesen sie
Und horen diess und dass;
Vom Lieben und vom Küssen
Sie brauchen's nicht zu wissen;
Und mancher ist im zwöflten Jahr
Fast klüger als sein Vater war
Da er die Mutter nahm."

"Œser taught me that the Ideal of Beauty is Simplicity and Repose, and thence it follows that no youth can be a Master."

CHAPTER I.

THE LEIPSIC STUDENT.

In the month of October, 1765, Goethe, aged sixteen, arrived in Leipsic, to commence his collegiate life, and to lay, as he hoped, the solid foundation of a future professorship. He took lodgings in the Feuerkugel, between the Old and New Markets, and was by the rector of the university inscribed on the 19th as student "in the Bavarian nation." At that period, and until quite recently, the university was classed according to four "nations," viz., the *Meisnian*, the *Saxon*, the *Bavarian*, and the *Polish*. When the inscription was official, the "nations" were what in Oxford and Paris are called "tongues;" when not official, they were students' clubs, such as they exist to this day. Goethe, as a Frankforter, was placed in the Bavarian.[1]

If the reader has any vivid recollection of the Leipsic chapters in the Autobiography, let me beg him to dismiss them with all haste from his mind; that very work records the inability of recalling the enchanting days of youth "with the dimmed powers of an aged mind;" and it is evident that the calm narrative of his Excellency J. W. von Goethe very inaccurately represents the actual condition of the raw, wild student, just escaped from the paternal roof, with money which seems unlimited, with the world before him which his genius is to conquer, His own letters, and the letters

[1] Otto Jahn, in the "Briefe an Leipziger Freunde," p. 9. A translation of these interesting letters has been published by Mr. Robert Slater, Junior.

of his friends, enable us "to read between the lines" of the Autobiography, and to read there a very different account.

He first presented himself to Hofrath Böhme, a genuine German professor, shut within the narrow circle of his specialty. To him, literature and the fine arts were trivialities; so that when the confiding youth confessed his secret ambition of studying *belles-lettres*, in lieu of the jurisprudence commanded by his father, he met with every discouragement. Yet it was not difficult to persuade this impressible student that to rival Otto and Heineccius was the true ambition of a vigorous mind. He set to work in earnest, at first, as students usually do on arriving at seats of learning. His attendance at the lectures on philosophy, history of law, and jurisprudence, was assiduous enough to have pleased even his father. But this flush of eagerness quickly subsided. Logic was invincibly repugnant to him. He hungered for realities, and could not be satisfied with definitions. To see operations of his mind, which from childhood upwards had been conducted with perfect ease and unconsciousness, suddenly pulled to pieces, in order that he might gain the superfluous knowledge of what they were, and what they were called, was to him tiresome and frivolous. "I fancied I knew as much about God and the world as the professor himself, and logic seemed in many places to come to a dead standstill." We are here on the threshold of that experience which has been immortalised in the scene between Mephistopheles and the Student. Jurisprudence soon became almost equally tiresome. He already knew as much law as the professor thought proper to communicate; and what with the tedium of the lectures, and the counter-attraction of delicious fritters, which used to come "hot from the pan, precisely at the hour of lecture," no wonder that volatile Sixteen soon abated attendance.

Volatile he was, wild, and somewhat rough, both in appearance and in speech. He had brought with him a wild, uneasy spirit struggling toward the light. He had also brought with him the rough manners of Frankfort, the strong Frankfort dialect and colloquialisms, rendered still more unfit for the Leipsic salon by a mixture of proverbs and Biblical allusions. Nay, even his costume was in unpleasant contrast with that of the society in which he moved. He had an ample wardrobe, but unhappily it was doubly out of fashion: it had been manufactured at home by one of his father's servants, and thus it was not only in the Frankfort style, but grotesquely made in that style. To complete his discomfiture, he saw a favourite low comedian throw an audience into fits of laughter by appearing on the stage dressed precisely in that costume, which he had hitherto worn as the latest novelty! All who can remember the early humiliations of being far behind their companions in matters of costume will sympathise with this youth. From one of his letters, written shortly after his arrival, we may catch a glimpse of him. "To-day I have heard two lectures: Böhme on law, and Ernesti on Cicero's 'Orator.' That'll do, eh? Next week we have collegium philosophicum et mathematicum. I haven't seen Gottsched yet. He is married again. She is nineteen, and he sixty-five. She is four feet high, and he seven feet. She is as thin as a herring, and he as broad as a feathersack. I make a great figure here! But as yet I am no dandy. I never shall become one. I need some skill to be industrious. In society, concerts, theatre, feastings, promenades, the time flies. Ha! it goes gloriously. But also expensively. The devil knows how my purse feels it. Hold! rescue! stop! There go two louis d'or. Help! there goes another. Heavens! another couple are gone. Pence are here as farthings are with you. Nevertheless one can live cheaply here. So I hope to

get off with two hundred thalers — what do I say? with three hundred. N. B. Not including what has already gone to the devil."

Dissatisfied with college, he sought instruction elsewhere. At the table where he dined daily, kept by Hofrath Ludwig, the rector, he met several medical students. He heard little talked of but medicine and botany, and the names of Haller, Linnæus, and Buffon were incessantly cited with respect. His ready quickness to interest himself in all that interested those around him threw him at once into these studies, which hereafter he was to pursue with passionate ardour, but which at present he only lightly touched. Another source of instruction awaited him, one which through life he ever gratefully acknowledged, namely, the society of women.

> "Willst du genau erfahren was sich ziemt,
> So frage nur bei edlen Frauen an!"[1]

So he speaks in "Tasso;" and here, in Leipsic, he was glad to learn from Frau Böhme not only some of the requisites for society, but also some principles of poetic criticism. This delicate, accomplished woman was able to draw him into society, to teach him l'ombre and piquet, to correct some of his awkwardness, and lastly to make him own that the poets he admired were a deplorable set, and that his own imitations of them deserved no better fate than the flames. He had got rid of his absurd wardrobe at one fell swoop, without a murmur at the expense. He now had also to cast away the poetic wardrobe brought from home with pride. He saw that it was poetic frippery — saw that his own poems were lifeless; accordingly, a holocaust was made of all his writings, prose and verse, and the kitchen fire wafted them into space.

[1] "Wouldst clearly learn what the Becoming is, inquire of noble-minded women!"

But society became vapid to him at last. He was not at his ease. Cards never amused him, and poetical discussion became painful. "I have not written a long while," he writes to his friend Riese. "Forgive me. Ask not after the cause! It was not occupation, at all events. You live contented in Marburg; I live so here. Solitary, solitary, quite solitary. Dear Riese, this solitude has awakened a certain sadness in my soul:

"'It is my only pleasure
Away from all the world,
To lie beside the streamlet,
And think of those I love.'

But contented as I am, I still feel the want of old companions. I sigh for my friends and my maiden, and when I feel that my sighs are vain —

"'Then fills my heart with sorrow, —
My eye is dim;
The stream which softly passed me
Roars now in storm.
No bird sings in the bushes,
The zephyr which refreshed me
Now storms from the north,
And whirls off the blossoms.
With tremor I fly from the spot, —
I fly, and seek in deserted streets
Sad solitude.'

Yet how happy I am, quite happpy! Horn has drawn me from low spirits by his arrival. He wonders why I am so changed.

"'He seeks to find the explanation,
Smiling thinks o'er it, looks me in the face;
But how can he find out my cause of grief?
I know it not myself.'

But I must tell you something of myself:

"'Quite other wishes rise within me now,
Dear friend, from those you have been wont to hear.

You know how seriously I wooed the Muse ;
With what a hate I scorned those whom the Law
And not the Muses beckoned. And you know
How fondly I (alas! most falsely) hoped
The Muses loved me, — gave me gift of song!
My Lyre sounded many a lofty song,
But not the Muses, not Apollo sent them.
True, it is my pride made me believe
The gods descended to me, and no Master
Produced more perfect works than mine!
No sooner came I here, than from my eyes
Fell off the scales, as I first learned to prize
Fame, and the mighty efforts fame required.
Then seemed to me my own ambitious flight
But as the agitation of a worm,
Who in the dust beholds the eagle soar,
And strives to reach him; strains every nerve,
Yet only agitates the dust he lies in.
Sudden the wind doth rise, and whirls the dust
In clouds, the worm is also raised with it:
Then the poor worm believes he has the wings
Of eagles, raising him too in the air!
But in another moment lulls the wind,
The cloud of dust drops gently on the ground,
And with the dust the worm, who crawls once more!'

Don't be angry with my galimathias. Good-bye. Horn will finish this letter."

Not only is this letter curious in its revelations of his state of mind, but the verses into which it spontaneously flows, and which I have translated with more jealous fidelity to the meaning than to poetical reproduction, show how among his friends he was even then regarded as a future poet. The confession uttered in his final verses clearly owes its origin to Frau Böhme's criticisms; but it is not every young poet who can be so easily discouraged. Even *his* discouragement could not last long. Schlosser, afterward his brother-in-law, came to Leipsic, and by his preaching and example once more roused the productive activity which showed itself in German, French, English and Italian verses.

Schlosser, who was ten years his senior, not only awakened emulation by his own superior knowledge and facility, but further aided him by introducing him to a set of literary friends with whom poetic discussions formed the staple of conversation. This circle met at the house of one Schönkopf, a *Weinhändler* and *Hauswirth*, living in the Brühl, No. 79.[1] To translate these words into English equivalents would only mislead the reader. Schönkopf kept neither an hotel, nor a public-house, but what in Germany is a substitute for both. He sold wine, and kept a table-d'hôte; occasionally also let bedrooms to travellers. His wife, a lively, cultivated woman, belonging to a good family in Frankfort, drew Frankfort visitors to the house; and with her Goethe soon became on terms of intimacy, which would seem surprising to the English reader who only heard of her as an innkeeper's wife. He became one of the family, and fell in love with the daughter. I must further beg the reader to understand that in Germany, to this day, there is a wide difference between the dining customs and our own. The English student, clerk, or bachelor, who dines at an eating-house, chop-house, or hotel, goes there simply to get his dinner, and perhaps look at the *Times*. Of the other diners he knows nothing, cares little. It is rare that a word is interchanged between him and his neighbour. Quite otherwise in Germany. There the same society is generally to be found at the same table. The table-d'hôte is composed of a circle of *habitués*, varied by occasional visitors, who in time become, perhaps, members of the circle. Even with strangers conversation is freely interchanged; and in a little while friendships are formed over these dinner-tables, according as natural taste and likings assimilate, which, extending beyond the mere hour of dinner, are carried into the

[1] The house still stands there, but has been almost entirely remodelled.

current of life. Germans do not rise so hastily from the table as we; for time with them is not so precious; life is not so crowded; time can be found for quiet after-dinner talk. The cigars and coffee, which appear before the cloth is removed, keep the company together; and in that state of suffused comfort which quiet digestion creates, they hear without anger the opinions of antagonists. In such a society must we imagine Goethe in the Schönkopf establishment, among students and men of letters, all eager in advancing their own opinions, and combating the false taste which was not their own.

To complete this picture, and to separate it still more from our English customs, you must imagine host and hostess dining at the table, while their charming daughter, who had cooked or helped to cook the dinner, brought them the wine. This daughter was the Anna Katharina, by intimates called Käthchen, and by Goethe, in the Autobiography, designated as Annchen and Annette. Her portrait, still extant, is very pleasing. She was then nineteen, lively, and loving; how could she be insensible to the love of this glorious youth, in all the fervour of genius, and with all the attractions of beauty? Insensible she was not, but being three years older and of a lively satirical turn, she rather played with and plagued him, than suffered her affections to be ensnared. They saw each other daily, not only at dinner but in the evenings, when he accompanied the piano of her brother by a feeble performance on the flute. They also got up private theatricals, in which Goethe and Käthchen played the lovers. "Minna von Barnhelm," then a novelty, was among the pieces performed. That these performances were of a strictly amateur order may be gathered from the fact that in one of them the part of a nightingale, which is important, was represented by a handkerchief, rolled up into such ornithological resemblance as art could reach.

Two letters, quite recently discovered, have fallen into my hands;[1] they give us a curious glimpse of him at this time, such as one may look for in vain in his own account of himself, or in the accounts of any other writer. They are from his friend Horn, whose arrival he mentioned in the letter previously quoted, and who was one of his daily companions in Frankfort. The first is dated 12th of August, 1766, and is addressed to one Moors, a Frankfort companion.

"To speak of our Goethe! He is still the same proud, fantastic personage as when I came hither. If you only saw him, you would either be mad with anger or you would burst with laughter. I cannot at all understand how a man can so quickly transform himself. His manners and his whole bearing, at present, are as different as possible from his former behaviour. Over and above his pride, he is a dandy; and all his clothes, handsome as they are, are in so odd a taste that they make him conspicuous among all the students. But this is indifferent to him; one may remonstrate with him for his folly as much as one likes —

"'Man mag Amphion seyn und Feld und Wald bezwingen,
Nur keinen Goethe nicht kann man zur Klugheit bringen.'[2]

All his thought and effort is only to please himself and his lady-love. In every circle he makes himself more ridiculous than agreeable. Merely because the lady admires it, he has put on tricks and gestures that one cannot possibly refrain from laughing at. He has adopted a walk which is quite insufferable. If you only saw it!

"'Il marche à pas comptés,
Comme un Recteur suivi des quatre Facultés.'

[1] Since printed in the work cited, on page 37.

[2] "One may be Amphion and coerce the trees and rocks, but not bring Goethe to his senses."

His society is every day more intolerable to me, and he, too, tries to avoid me whenever he can. I am too plain a man for him to walk across the street with me. What would the 'king of Holland' say if he saw him in this guise? Do write again to him soon and tell him your opinion; else he and his lady-love will remain as silly as ever. Heaven only preserve me, as long as I am here, from any sweetheart, for the women here are the very devil. Goethe is not the first who has made a fool of himself to please his Dulcinea. I only wish you could see her just for once: she is the most absurd creature in the world. Her *mine coquette avec un air hautain* is all with which she has bewitched Goethe. Dear friend! how glad should I be if Goethe were still what he was in Frankfort! Good friends as we were formerly, we can now scarcely endure each other for a quarter of an hour. Yet with time I still hope to convert him, though it is a hard matter to make a coxcomb wise. But I will venture everything for the sake of it.

"'Ach! früchtete dies mein Bemühn!
Ach! könnt' ich meinen Zweck erreichen!
Ich wollt' nicht Luther, nicht Calvin,
Noch einem der Bekehrer weichen.'[1]

I cannot write to him again what I have here told you. I shall be delighted if you will do so. I care neither for his anger nor for that of his lady-love. For, after all, he is not easily offended with me; even when we have quarrelled he sends for me next day. So much of him; more another time.

"Live and forget not thy HORN."

Moors followed Horn's advice, and expressed to Goethe, apparently in very plain terms, his astonish-

[1] "Ah, if my attempt succeed, I shall not envy Luther, Calvin, nor any other Converter."

ment and dissatisfaction at the disadvantageous change. In October of the same year, he received from Horn the following explanation:

"But, dear Moors! how glad you will be to learn that we have lost no friend in our Goethe, as we falsely supposed. He had so travestied himself as to deceive not only me but a great many others, and we should never have discovered the real truth of the matter, if your letter had not threatened him with the loss of a friend. I must tell you the whole story as he himself told it to me, for he has commissioned me to do so in order to save him the trouble. He is in love it is true — he has confessed it to me, and will confess it to you; but his love, though his circumstances are sad, is not culpable, as I formerly supposed. He loves. But not that young lady whom I suspected him of loving. He loves a girl beneath him in rank, but a girl whom — I think I do not say too much — you would yourself love if you saw her. I am no lover, so I shall write entirely without passion. Imagine to yourself a woman, well-grown though not very tall; a round, agreeable, though not extraordinarily beautiful face; open, gentle, engaging manners; a very pretty understanding, without having had any great education. He loves her very tenderly, with the perfect, honest intentions of a virtuous man, though he knows that she can never be his. Whether she loves him in return I know not. You know, dear Moors, that is a point about which one cannot well ask; but this much I can say to you, that they seem to be born for each other. Now observe his cunning! That no one may suspect him of such an attachment, he undertakes to persuade the world of precisely the opposite, and hitherto he has been extraordinarily successful. He makes a great parade and seems to be paying court to a certain young lady of whom I have told you before. He can see his beloved and converse with her at certain

times without giving occasion for the slightest suspicion, and I often accompany him to her. If Goethe were not my friend, I should fall in love with her myself. Meanwhile he is supposed to be in love with the Fräulein —— (but what do you care about her name?) and people are fond of teasing him about her. Perhaps she herself believes that he loves her, but the good lady deceives herself. Since that time he has admitted me to closer confidence, has made me acquainted with his affairs, and shown me that his expenditure is not so great as might be supposed. He is more of a philosopher and moralist than ever; and innocent as his love is, he nevertheless disapproves it. We often dispute about this, but let him take what side he will, he is sure to win; for you know what weight he can give to only apparent reasons. I pity him and his good heart, which really must be in a very melancholy condition, since he loves the most virtuous and perfect of girls without hope. But if we suppose that she loves him in return, how miserable must he be on that very account! I need not explain that to you, who so well know the human heart. He has told me that he will write you one or two things about it himself. There is no necessity for me to recommend silence to you on this subject; for you yourself see how necessary it is. . . ."

In his little poem, "Der Wahre Genuss," he says, "She is perfect, and her only fault is — that she loves me:"

> "Sie ist vollkommen, und sie fehlet
> Darin allein dass sie mich liebt."

And he wishes us to believe that he teased her with trifles and idle suspicions; was jealous without cause, convinced without reason; plagued her with fantastic quarrels, till at last her endurance was exhausted, and her love was washed away in tears. No sooner was he aware of this, than he repented, and tried to recover

the jewel which like a prodigal he had cast away. In vain. He was in despair, and tried in dissipation to forget his grief.

This is his version of the affair given in the Autobiography, but by the evidence of his letters it is clear that it was not he who trifled with her affections, but she who played with him. It was not he who was inclined to escape when he found her love secured; he never did secure it.

> "*Erringen will der Mensch; er will nicht sicher seyn.*"
> ("Man loves to conquer, not to feel secure.")

As he truly says, in the little piece wherein he dramatises this episode; but the truth is often as applicable to woman as to man. At any rate, we know from the poet's own letters that it was Käthchen who teased and laughed at him, and it was in reality his own torments that he dramatised.

If we reverse the positions, we may read in some of his lyrics the burden of this experience. One entire play, or pastoral, is devoted to a poetical representation of these lovers' quarrels: this is "Die Laune des Verliebten," which is very curious as the earliest extant work of the great poet, and as the earliest specimen of his tendency to turn experience into song. In the opera of "Erwin und Elmire" he subsequently treated a similar subject, in a very different manner. The first effort is the more curious of the two. The style of composition is an imitation of those pastoral dramas, which, originated by Tasso and Guarini in the soft and almost luscious "Aminta" and "Pastor Fido," had by the French been made popular all over Europe.

Two happy and two unhappy lovers are somewhat artificially contrasted; the two latter representing Käthchen and the poet. Action there is none; the piece is made up of talk about love, some felicitous verses of the true stamp and ring, and an occasional

glimpse of insight into the complexities of passion. Eridon, the jealous lover, torments his mistress in a style at once capricious and natural; with admirable truth she deplores his jealousy and excuses it:

"Zwar oft betrübt er mich, doch rührt ihn auch mein Schmerz.
Wirft er mir etwas vor, fängt er mich an zu plagen,
So darf ich nur ein Wort, ein gutes Wort nur sagen,
Gleich ist er umgekehrt, die wilde Zanksucht flieht,
Er weint sogar mit mir, wenn er mich weinen sieht.[1]

It is admirably said that the very absence of any cause for grief prompts him to create a grief:

"*Da er kein Elend hat, will er sich Elend machen.*"

Amine is also touched with a delicate pencil. Her lovingness, forgivingness, and endurance are true to life. Here is a couplet breathing the very tenderness of love:

"Der Liebe leichtes Band machst du zum schweren Joch.
Du quälst mich als Tyrann; und ich? *ich lieb dich noch!*"[2]

One more line and I have done: Eglé is persuading Eridon that Amine's love of dancing is no trespass on her love for him; since, after having enjoyed her dance, her first thought is to seek him:

"*Und durch das Suchen selbst wirst du ihr immer lieber.*"[3]

In such touches as these lurks the future poet; still more so in the very choice of the subject. Here, as ever, he does not cheat himself with pouring feigned

[1] "'Tis true he vexes me, and yet my sorrow pains him.
Yet let him but reproach — begin to tease me,
Then need I but a word, a single kind word utter,
Away flies all his anger in a moment,
And he will weep with me, because he sees me weep."

[2] "The fairy link of Love thou mak'st a galling yoke.
Thou treat'st me as a slave; and I? I love thee still!"

[3] "And in the very search her heart grows fonder of thee."

sorrows into feigning verse: he embalms his own experience. He does not trouble himself with drawing characters and events from the shelves of the library: his soul is the fountain of his inspiration. His own life was uniformly the text from which he preached. He sang what he had felt, and because he had felt it; not because others had sung before him. He was the echo of no man's joys and sorrows, he was the lyrist of his own. This is the reason why his poems have an endless charm: they are as indestructible as passion itself. They reach our hearts because they issue from his. Every bullet hits the mark, according to the huntsman's superstition, if it have first been dipped in the marksman's blood.

He has told us, emphatically, that *all his works are but fragments of the grand confession of his life.* Of him we may say what Horace so well says of Lucilius, that he trusted his secrets to books as to faithful friends:

> "Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> Credebat libris; neque, si male cesserat, unquam
> Decurrens alio, neque si bene: *quo fit, ut omnis*
> *Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella*
> *Vita senis.*"[1]

How clearly he saw the nullity of every other procedure is shown in various passages of his letters and conversations. Riemer has preserved one worth selecting: "There will soon be a poetry without poetry, a real ποίησις, where the subject-matter is ἐν ποιήσει, in the *making:* a manufactured poetry."[2] He dates from

[1] Horace: lib. II. 1.

[2] "Briefe von und an Goethe." Herausgeg. von Riemer. 1846. What follows is untranslatable, from the play on words: "Die Dichtee heissen dann so, wie schon Moritz spasste, *a spissando, densando*, vom Dichtmachen, weil sie Alles zusammendrängen, und kommen mir vor wie eine Art Wurstmacher, die in den Darm des Hexameters oder Trimeters ihre Wort und Sylbenfülle stopfen."

Leipsic the origin of his own practice, which he says was a tendency he never could deviate from all his life: "namely, the tendency to transform into an image, a poem, everything which delighted or troubled me, or otherwise occupied me, and to come to some distinct understanding with myself upon it, to set my inward being at rest." The reason he gives for this tendency is very questionable. He attributes it to the isolation in which he lived with respect to matters of taste, forcing him to look within for poetical subjects. But had not the tendency of his genius lain in that direction, no such circumstances could have directed it.

Young, curious, and excitable as he was, nothing is more natural than that he should somewhat shock the respectabilities by his pranks and extravagances. His constant companion was Behrisch, one of the most interesting figures among these Leipsic friends. With strongly marked features and a certain dry causticity of manner, always well dressed, and always preserving a most staid demeanour, Behrisch, then about thirty years of age, had an ineradicable love of fun and mystification. He could treat trifles with an air of immense importance. He would invent narratives about the perversity and absurdity of others, in order to convulse his hearers with the unction of his philippics against such absurdity. He was fond of dissipation, into which he carried an air of supreme gravity. He rather affected the French style of *politesse*, and spoke the language well; and, above all, he had some shrewd good sense, as a buttress for all his follies. Behrisch introduced him to some damsels who "were better than their reputation," and took him into scenes more useful to the future poet than advantageous to the repute of the young student. He also laughed him out of all respect for gods, goddesses, and other mythological inanities which still pressed their heavy dulness on his verse; would not let him commit the imprudence of

rushing into print, but calmed the author's longing, by beautifully copying his verses into a volume, adorning them with vignettes. Behrisch was, so to speak, the precursor of Merck; his influence not so great, but somewhat of the same kind. The friends were displeased to see young Goethe falling thus away from good society into such a disreputable course; but just as Lessing before him had neglected the elegant Leipsic-world for actors and authors of more wit than money, and preferred Mylius, with his shoes down at heel, to all that the best-dressed society could offer; so did young Goethe neglect salon and lecture-hall for the many-coloured scene of life in less elegant circles. Enlightened by the result, we foresee that the poet will receive little injury from these sources: he is gaining experience; and experience even of the worst sides of human nature will be sublimated into noble uses, as carrion by the wise farmer is turned into excellent manure. In this great drama of life every theatre has its greenroom; and unless the poet know how it is behind the scenes he will never understand how actors speak and move.

Goethe had often been "behind the scenes," looking at the skeleton which stands in almost every house. His adventure with Gretchen, and its consequences, early opened his eyes to the strange gulfs which lie under the crust of society. "Religion, morals, law, rank, habits," he says, "rule over the *surface* of social life. Streets of magnificent houses are kept clean; every one outwardly conducts himself with propriety; but the disorder within is often only the more desolate; and a polished exterior covers many a wall which totters, and falls with a crash during the night, all the more terrible because it falls during a calm. How many families had I not more or less distinctly known in which bankruptcy, divorce, seduction, murder, and robbery had wrought destruction! Young as I was, I

had often, in such cases, lent my succour; for as my frankness awakened confidence, and my discretion was known, and as my activity did not shun any sacrifice — indeed, rather preferred the most perilous occasions — I had frequently to mediate, console, and try to avert the storm; in the course of which I could not help learning many sad and humiliating facts."

It was natural that such sad experience should at first lead him to view the whole social fabric with contempt. To relieve himself, he — being then greatly captivated with Molière's works — sketched the plans of several dramas; but their plots were so uniformly unpleasant, and the catastrophes so tragic, that he did not work out these plans. "The Fellow Sinners" (*Die Mitschuldigen*) was sketched, though not completed till the next year during his convalescence at home. The piece now printed among his works is no doubt greatly altered from the original; and since what we have is the piece rearranged for the Weimar stage in 1776, and no copy of the original is extant, we are entirely at a loss in forming a judgment of the amount of dramatic maturity and literary facility it may have exhibited as the production of a youth of eighteen. It can only be relied on as indicating the direction of his mind. The choice of the subject and the characters we must assign to this period, however little of the original treatment may remain. Few, in England at least, ever read it; yet such as we have it now, it is worth a rapid glance, is lively, and strong with effective situations and two happily sketched characters — Söller, the scampish husband, and his father-in-law, the inquisitive landlord. The plot is briefly this: Söller's wife — before she became his wife — loved a certain Alcest; and her husband's conduct is not such as to make her forget her former lover, who, at the opening of the play, is residing in her father's hotel. Alcest prevails upon her to grant him an interview in

his own room, while her husband Söller, is at the masquerade. Unluckily, Söller has determined to rob Alcest that very night. He enters the room by stealth — opens the escritoire — takes the money — is alarmed by a noise — hides himself in an alcove, and then sees his father-in-law, the landlord, enter the room! The old man, unable to resist a burning curiosity to know the contents of a letter which Alcest has received that day, has come to read it in secret. But he in turn is alarmed by the appearance of his daughter, and, letting the candle fall, he escapes. Söller is now the exasperated witness of an interview between Alcest and his wife: a situation which, like the whole of the play, is a mixture of the ludicrous and the painful — very dramatic and very unpleasant.

On the following day the robbery is discovered. Sophie thinks the robber is her father: he returns her the compliment — nay, more, stimulated by his eager curiosity, he consents to inform Alcest of his suspicion in return for the permission to read the contents of the mysterious letter. A father sacrificing his daughter to gratify a paltry curiosity is too gross; it is the only trait of juvenility in the piece — a piece otherwise prematurely old. Enraged at such an accusation, Sophie retorts the charge upon her father, and some unamiable altercations result. The piece winds up by the self-betrayal of Söller, who, intimating to Alcest that he was present during a certain nocturnal interview, shields himself from punishment. The moral is — "Forget and forgive among fellow sinners."

CHAPTER II.

MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.

THE two dramatic works noticed toward the close of the last chapter may be said to begin the real poetic career of their author, because in them he drew from his actual experience. They will furnish us with a text for some remarks on his peculiar characteristics, the distinct recognition of which will facilitate the comprehension of his life and writings. We make a digression, but the reader will find that in thus swerving from the direct path, we are only tacking to fill our sails with wind.

Frederick Schlegel (and after him Coleridge) aptly said that every man was born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. This distinction is often expressed in the terms *subjective* and *objective* intellects. Perhaps we shall best define these by calling the objective intellect one which is eminently *impersonal*, and the subjective intellect one which is eminently *personal;* the former disengaging itself as much as possible from its own prepossessions, striving to see and represent objects as they exist; the other viewing all objects in the light of its own feelings and preconceptions. It is needless to add that no mind can be exclusively objective, nor exclusively subjective; but every mind has a more or less dominant tendency in one of these directions. We see the contrast in Philosophy, as in Art. The realist argues from Nature upwards, starting from reality, and never long losing sight of it, but even in the adventurous flights of hypothesis and speculation

striving to make his hypothesis correspond with realities. The idealist starts from some conception, and seeks in realities only visible illustrations of a deeper existence. The achievements of modern Science, and the masterpieces of Art, prove that the grandest generalisations and the most elevated types can only be reached by the former method; and that what is called the "ideal school," so far from having the superiority which it claims, is only more lofty in its pretensions; the realist, with more modest pretensions, achieves loftier results. The Objective and Subjective, or, as they are also improperly called, the Real and Ideal, are thus contrasted as the termini of two opposite lines of thought. In Philosophy, in Morals, and in Art, we see a constant antagonism between these two tendencies. Thus in Morals the Platonists are those who seek the highest morality *out* of human nature, instead of in the healthy development of all human tendencies, and their due coördination; they hope, in the *suppression* of integral faculties, to attain some superhuman standard. They superpose *ab extra*, instead of trying to develop *ab intra*. They draw from their own minds, or from the dogmas handed to them by tradition, the notion of a mould, into which they attempt to fuse the activity of Nature.

If this school had not in its favour the imperious instinct of progress, and aspirations after a better, it would not hold its ground. But it satisfies that craving, and thus deludes many minds into acquiescence. The poetical and enthusiastic disposition most readily acquiesces: preferring to overlook what man *is*, in its delight of contemplating what the poet makes him. To such a mind all conceptions of man must have a halo round them — half mist, half sunshine; the hero must be a Demigod, in whom no *valet de chambre* can find a failing: the villain must be a Demon, for whom no charity can find an excuse.

Not to extend this to a dissertation, let me at once say that Goethe belonged to the *objective* class. "Everywhere in Goethe," said Franz Horn, "you are on firm land or island; nowhere the infinite sea." A better characterisation was never written in one sentence. In every page of his works may be read a strong feeling for the real, the concrete, the living; and a repugnance as strong for the vague, the abstract, or the supersensuous. His constant striving was to study Nature, so as to see her *directly*, and not through the mists of fancy, or through the distortions of prejudice — to look at men, and *into* them — to apprehend things as they were. In his conception of the universe he could not separate God *from* it, placing God above it, beyond it, as the philosophers did who represented God whirling the universe round his finger, "seeing it go." Such a conception revolted him. He animated the universe with God; he animated fact with divine life; he saw in Reality the incarnation of the Ideal; he saw in Morality the high and harmonious action of all human tendencies; he saw in Art the highest representation of Life. Nature, Nature, Nature, is everywhere the burden of his striving. It was to him an inexhaustible mystery and delight; its commonest details were of divine significance. To overlook and undervalue the facts of Nature, and to fix attention on fleeting personal impressions, or purely individual fancies, was a sign of decadence at every period of history. "No one merits the name of a poet, nor of a philosopher, unless he can assimilate Nature, and paint it or explain it." He boasted that, unlike so many of his contemporaries, he had "never thought about thinking;" and had carefully avoided mingling his personality with the great impersonality of Nature. His vision was all directed outwards. If we look through his works with critical attention, we shall observe the objective tendency determining —

first, his choice of subjects; secondly, his handling of character; and, thirdly, his style. Intimately connected with this concreteness is another characteristic of his genius. His imagination was not, like that of many poets, incessantly at work in the combination and recombination of images which could be accepted for their own sake. It demanded the confrontation with fact; it moved with ease only on the secure ground of Reality. In science there are men whose active imaginations carry them into hypothesis and speculation, all the more easily because they do not bring hypothesis to the stern test of fact. The mere delight in combining ideas suffices them: provided the deductions are *logical*, they seem almost indifferent to their *truth*. There are poets of this order; indeed most poets are of this order. Goethe was of a quite opposite tendency. In him an imperious desire for reality controlled the errant facility of imagination. "The first and last thing demanded of Genius," he says, "is love of truth."

Hence we see why he was led to portray men and women instead of demigods and angels; no Posas and Theklas, but Egmonts and Clärchens. Hence also his portraitures carry their moral *with* them, *in* them, but have no moral superposed, — no accompanying verdict as from some outside judge. His drama is without a chorus. Further, — and this is a point to be insisted on, — his style both in poetry and prose, is subject to the same law. It is vivid with pictures, but it has scarcely any extraneous imagery. Most poets describe object by metaphors or comparisons; Goethe seldom tells you what an object is *like*, he tells you what it *is*. Shakespeare is very unlike Goethe in this respect. The prodigal luxuriance of his imagery often entangles, in its overgrowth, the movement of his verse. It is true, he also is eminently concrete; he sees the real object vividly, and he makes us see it vividly; but he

scarcely ever paints it save in the colours of metaphor and simile. Shakespeare's imagery bubbles up like a perpetual spring: to say that it repeatedly *overflows*, is only to say that his mind was lured by its own sirens away from the direct path. He did not master his Pegasus at all times, but let the wild careering creature take its winged way. Goethe, on the contrary, always masters his: perhaps because his steed had less of restive life in its veins. Not only does he master it, and ride with calm assured grace, he seems so bent on reaching the goal, that he scarcely thinks of anything else. To quit metaphor, he may be said to use with the utmost sparingness all the extraneous aids of imagery; he tries to create images of the objects, rather than other images of what the objects are like.

Shakespeare, like Goethe, was a decided realist. He, too, was content to let his pictures of life carry their own moral with them. He uttered no moral verdict; he was no Chorus preaching on the text of what was pictured. Hence we cannot gather from his works what were his opinions. But there is this difference between him and Goethe, that his intense sympathy with the energetic passions and fierce volitions of our race made him delight in heroic characters, in men of robust frames and impassioned lives. Goethe, with an infusion of the best blood of Schiller, would have been a Shakespeare; but, such as Nature made him he was — Goethe, not Shakespeare.

Turning from these abstract considerations to the two earliest works which form our text, we observe how this youth is determined in the choice of his subject by the realistic tendency. Instead of ranging through the enchanted gardens of Armida — instead of throwing himself back into the distant Past, thus escaping from the trammels of a modern subject, which the confrontation of reality always makes more difficult — this

boy fashions into verse his own experience, his own observation. He looks into his own heart — he peers into the byways of civilisation, walking with curious observation through squalid streets and dark fearful alleys. Singular, moreover, is the absence of any fierce indignation, any cry of pain at the sight of so much corruption underlying the surface of society. In youth the loss of illusions is generally followed by a cynical misanthropy, or a vehement protest. But Goethe is neither cynical nor indignant. He seems to accept the fact as a thing to be admitted, and quietly striven against, with a view to its amelioration. He seems to think with the younger Pliny, that indulgence is a part of justice, and would cite with approval the favourite maxim of the austere yet humane Thraseas, *qui vitia odit homines odit*, — he who hates vices hates mankind.[1] For in the "Mitschuldigen" he presents us with a set of people whose consolation is to exclaim "Rogues all!" — and in after years he wrote of this piece, that it was dictated, though unconsciously, by "far-sighted tolerance in the appreciation of moral actions, as expressed in the eminently Christian sentence, '*Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone.*'"

[1] Pliny, Epist., lib. viii. 22. After I had written this sentence, Schöll published Goethe's Note-book kept at Strasburg, wherein I found this very aphorism transcribed.

CHAPTER III.

ART STUDIES.

FRAU BÖHME died. In her he lost a monitress and friend, who had kept some check on his waywardness, and drawn him into society. The Professor had long since cooled towards him, after giving up all hopes of making him another Heineccius. A youth with such remarkable dispositions, who would *not* be assiduous in attendance at lecture, and whose amusement during lecture was to sketch caricatures of various law dignitaries in his note-book: another ornament to jurisprudence irrecoverably lost! Indeed, the collegiate aspect of this Leipsic residence is not one promising to professors; but we — instructed by the result — know how much better he was employed, than if he had filled a hundred volumes of note-books by diligent attendance at lecture. He studied much, in a desultory manner; he studied Molière and Corneille; he began to translate "Le Menteur." The theatre was a perpetual attraction; and even the uneasy, unsatisfied condition of his affections, was instructing him in directions whither no professor could lead him. But greater than all this was the influence of Shakespeare, whom he first learned a little of through Dodd's "Beauties of Shakespeare," a work not much prized in England, where the plays form part of our traditional education, but which must have been a revelation to the Germans, something analogous to what Charles Lamb's "Specimens of the Old English Drama" was to

us. The strength and beauty of language, the bold and natural imagery of these "Beauties," startled the young poets of that day, like the discovery of huge fossil remains of some antediluvian fauna; "and to gratify the curiosity thus awakened," he says, "there came Wieland's prose translation of several plays, which we studied with enthusiasm."[1]

There are no materials to fill up the gaps of his narrative here, so that I am forced to leave much indistinct. For instance, he has told us that Käthchen and he were no longer lovers; but we find him writing to her in a lover-like tone from Frankfort, and we know that friendly intercourse still subsisted between them. Of this, however, not a word occurs in the Autobiography. Nor are we accurately informed how he made the acquaintance of the Breitkopf family. Breitkopf was a bookseller in Leipsic, in whose house Literature and Music were highly prized. Bernhard, the eldest son, was an excellent performer, and composed music to Goethe's songs, which were published in 1769, under this title: "Neue Lieder in Melodieen gesetzt von Bernhard Theodor Breitkopf." The poet is not named. This *Liederbuch* contains twenty songs, the majority of which were subsequently reprinted in the poet's works. They are love songs, and contain a love-philosophy more like what is to be found in Catullus, Horace, and Wieland, than what one would expect from a boy, did we not remember how the braggadocio of youth delights in expressing *roué* sentiments, as if to give itself airs of profound experience. This youth sings with gusto of inconstancy:

"Da fühl ich die Freuden der wechselden Lust."

[1] It is possible that Wieland's translation only then fell into Goethe's hands, but the publication was commenced before his arrival in Leipsic, namely, in 1761.

He gaily declares that if one mistress leaves you, another will love you, and the second is sweeter to kiss than the first:

"Es küsst sich so süsse der Busen der Zweiten,
Als kaum sich der Busen der Ersten geküsst."

Through Breitkopf he learned to know Hiller; and among Hiller's pupils was the Corona Schröter, whom we shall meet hereafter in the Weimar circle. She was a year older than Goethe, and surrounded with admirers, both of her beauty and her talents. He is said, I know not on what evidence, to have lent his poetical talent to some of these admirers.

Another acquaintance, and one more directly influential, was that of Oeser, the director of the Drawing Academy. He had been the friend and teacher of Winckelmann, and his name stood high among connoisseurs. Goethe, who at home had learned a little drawing, joined Oeser's class, where, among other fellow students, was the Hardenberg who afterward made such a noise in the Prussian political world. He joined the class, and did his best to acquire by labour the skill which only talent can acquire. That he made little progress in drawing, we learn from his subsequent confession, no less than from his failure; but tuition had this effect at least — it taught him to use his eyes. In a future chapter[1] I shall have occasion to enter more fully on this subject. Enough if for the present a sentence or two from his letters tell us the enthusiasm Oeser inspired. "What do I not owe to you," he writes to him, "for having pointed out to me the way of the True and the Beautiful!" and concludes by saying, "the undersigned is your work!" Writing to a friend of Oeser's, he says that Oeser stands beside Shakespeare and Wieland in the influence exercised over him. "His instruction will influence my whole

[1] See Book V., ch. v.

life. He it was who taught me that the Ideal of Beauty is Simplicity and Repose, and thence it follows that no youth can be a master."

Instruction in the theory of Art he gained from Oeser, from Winckelmann, and from "Laokoon," the incomparable little book which Lessing at this period carelessly flung upon the world. Its effect upon Goethe can only be appreciated by those who early in life have met with this work, and risen from it with minds widened, strengthened, and inspired.[1] It opened a pathway amid confusion, throwing light upon many of the obscurest problems which torment the artist. It awakened in Goethe an intense yearning to see the works of ancient masters; and these beckoned from Dresden. To Dresden he went. But here, in spite of Oeser, Winckelmann, and Lessing, in spite of grand phrases about Art, the invincible tendency of his nature asserted itself, and instead of falling into raptures with the great Italian pictures, he confesses that he took their merits upon trust, and was really charmed by none but the landscape and Dutch painters, whose subjects appealed directly to his experience. He did not feel the greatness of Italian Art; and what he did not feel he would not feign.

It is worth noticing that this trip to Dresden was taken in absolute secrecy. As, many years later, he stole away to Italy without letting his friends even suspect his project, so now he left Leipsic for Dresden without a word of intimation. Probably the same motive actuated him in both instances. He went to see, to enjoy, to learn, and did not want to be disturbed by personal influence — by other people's opinions.

On his return he was active enough with drawing. He made the acquaintance of an engraver named

[1] Lord Macaulay told me that the reading of this little book formed an epoch in his mental history; and that he learned more from it than he had ever learned elsewhere.

Stock,[1] and with his usual propensity to try his hand at whatever his friends were doing, he forthwith began to learn engraving. In the *Morgenblatt* for 1828 there is a detailed account of two of his engravings, both representing landscapes with small cascades shut in by rocks and grottoes; at the foot of each are these words: "*peint par A. Theile, gravé par Goethe.*" One plate is dedicated "*à Monsieur Goethe, Conseiller actuel de S.M. Impériale par son fils très-obéissant.*" In the room which they show to strangers in his house in Frankfort, there is also a specimen of his engraving — very amateurish; but Madame von Goethe showed me one in her possession which really has merit.

Melancholy, wayward, and capricious, he allowed Lessing to pass through Leipsic without making any attempt to see the man he so much admired: a caprice he afterward repented, for the opportunity never recurred. Something of his hypochondria was due to mental, but more to physical causes. Dissipation, bad diet (especially the beer and coffee), and absurd endeavours to carry out Rousseau's preaching about returning to a state of nature, had seriously affected his health. The crisis came at last. One summer night (1768) he was seized with violent hemorrhage. He had only strength enough to call to his aid the fellow student who slept in the next room. Medical assistance promptly came. He was saved; but his convalescence was embittered by the discovery of a tumour on his neck, which lasted some time. His recovery was slow, but it seemed as if it relieved him from all the peccant humours which had made him hypochondriacal, leaving behind an inward lightness and joyousness to which he had long been a stranger. One thing greatly touched him — the sympathy expressed for him by several

[1] This Stock had two amiable daughters, one of whom married (1785) Körner, the correspondent of Schiller, and father of the poet.

eminent men; a sympathy he felt to be quite undeserved, for there was not one among them whom he had not vexed or affronted by his caprices, extravagances, morbid opposition, and stubborn persistence.

One of these friends, Langer, not only made an exchange of books with him, giving a set of Classic authors for a set of German, but also, in devout yet not dogmatic conversation, led his young friend to regard the Bible in another light than that of a merely human composition. "I loved the Bible and valued it, for it was almost the only book to which I owed my moral culture. Its events, dogmas, and symbols were deeply impressed on my mind." He therefore felt little sympathy with the Deists who were at this time agitating Europe; and although his tendency was strongly against the Mystics, he was afraid lest the poetical spirit should be swept away along with the prophetical. In one word, he was in a state of religious doubt — "destitute of faith, yet terrified at scepticism."

This unrest and this bodily weakness he carried with him, September, 1768, from Leipsic to Frankfort, whither we will follow him.

CHAPTER IV.

RETURN HOME.

He returned home a boy in years, in experience a man. Broken in health, unhappy in mind, with no strong impulses in any one direction, uncertain of himself and of his aims, he felt, as he approached his native city, much like a repentant prodigal, who has no vision of the fatted calf awaiting him. His father, unable to perceive the real progress he had made, was very much alive to the slender prospect of his becoming a distinguished jurist. The fathers of poets are seldom gratified with the progress in education visible to them; and the reason is that they do not know their sons to be poets, nor understand that the poet's orbit is not the same as their own. They tread the common highway on which the milestones accurately mark distances; and seeing that their sons have trudged but little way according to this measurement, are filled with misgivings. Of that silent progress, which consists less in travelling on the broad highway, than in development of the limbs which will make a sturdy traveller, parents seldom judge.

Mother and sister, however, touched by the worn face, and, woman-like, more interested in the man than what he had achieved, received him with an affection which compensated for his father's coldness. There is quite a pathetic glimpse given of this domestic interior in the Autobiography, where he alludes to his father's impatience at his illness, and anxiety for his speedy recovery. And we gladly escape from this picture to

the Letters written from Frankfort to his old love, Käthchen Schönkopf.[1] It appears that he left Leipsic without saying adieu. He thus refers to it:

"Apropos, you will forgive me that I did not take leave of you. I was in the neighbourhood, I was even below at the door; *I saw the lamp burning and went to the steps, but I had not the courage to mount.* For the last time — how should I have come down again?

"Thus I now do what I ought to have done then: I thank you for all the love and friendship which you have constantly shown me, and which I shall never forget. I need not beg you to remember me, — a thousand occasions will arise which must remind you of a man who for two years and a half was part of your family, who indeed often gave you cause for displeasure, but still was always a good lad, and whom it is to be hoped you will often miss; at least, I often miss you."

The tumour on his neck became alarming: the more so as the surgeons, uncertain about its nature, were wavering in their treatment. Frequent cauterisation, and constant confinement to his room, were the worst parts of the cure. He read, drew, and etched to while away the time. It was also perhaps at this period that he completed the two plays which he had roughly sketched at Leipsic, and of which an account has already been given in the preceding chapter. By the end of the year this letter to Käthchen announces his recovery.

"MY BEST, ANXIOUS FRIEND: — You will doubtless have heard from Horn, on the new year, the news of my recovery; and I hasten to confirm it. Yes, dear friend, it is over, and in future you must take it quietly, even if you hear — he is laid up again! You know

[1] Printed in "Goethe's Briefe an seine Leipziger Freunde." Herausgegeben von Otto Jahn.

that my constitution often makes a slip, and in a week gets on its legs again; this time it was bad, and seemed yet worse than it was, and was attended with terrible pains. Misfortune is also a good. I have learned much in illness which I could have learned nowhere else in life. It is over, and I am quite brisk again, though for three whole weeks I have not left my room, and scarcely any one has visited me but my doctor, who, thank God! is an amiable man! An odd thing it is in us men: when I was in lively society I was out of spirits, now I am forsaken by all the world I am cheerful; for even throughout my illness my cheerfulness has comforted my family, who were not in a condition to comfort themselves, to say nothing of me. The new year's song which you have also received, I composed during an attack of great foolery, and had it printed for the sake of amusement. Besides this, I draw a great deal, write tales, and am contented with myself. God give me, this new year, what is good for me; may He do the same for all of us, and if we pray for nothing more than this, we may certainly hope that He will give it us. If I can only get along till April, I shall easily reconcile myself to my condition. Then I hope things will be better; in particular my health may make progress daily, because it is now known precisely what is the matter with me. My lungs are as sound as possible, but there is something wrong at the stomach. And, in confidence, I have had hopes given me of a pleasant, enjoyable mode of life, so that my mind is quite cheerful and at rest. As soon as I am better again I shall go away into foreign countries, and it will depend only on you and another person how soon I shall see Leipsic again; in the meantime I think of going to France to see what French life is, and learn the French language. So you can imagine what a charming man I shall be when I return to you. It often occurs to me, that it would be a laughable

"Rath Moritz gave a great party"
Photogravure from the painting by Kirkbach

affair, if, in spite of all my projects, I were to die before Easter. In that case I would order a gravestone for myself in Leipsic churchyard, that at least every year on St. John's Day you might visit the figure of St. John and my grave. What do you think?"

To celebrate his recovery, Rath Moritz gave a great party, at which all the Frankfort friends assembled. In a little while, however, another illness came to lay the poet low; and, worse than all, there came the news from Leipsic that Kätchen was engaged to a Doctor Kanne, whom Goethe had introduced to her. This for ever decided his restlessness about her. Here is a letter from him.

"MY DEAR, MY BELOVED FRIEND: — A dream last night has reminded me that I owe you an answer. Not that I had entirely forgotten it — nor that I never think of you: no, my dear friend, every day says something to me of you and of my faults. But it is strange, and it is an experience which perhaps you also know, the remembrance of the absent, though not extinguished by time, is veiled. The distractions of our life, acquaintance with new objects, in short, every change in our circumstances, do to our hearts what smoke and dirt do to a picture — they make the delicate touches quite undiscernible, and in such a way that one does not know how it comes to pass. A thousand things remind me of you; I see your image a thousand times, but as faintly, and often with as little emotion, as if I thought of some one quite strange to me; it often occurs to me that I owe you an answer, without my feeling the slightest impulse to write to you. Now, when I read your kind letter, which is already some months old, and see your friendship and your solicitude for one so unworthy, I am shocked at myself, and for the first time feel what

a change has taken place in my heart, that I can be without joy at that which formerly would have lifted me up to heaven. Forgive me this! Can one blame an unfortunate man because he is unable to rejoice? My wretchedness has made me dead to the good which still remains to me. My body is restored, but my mind is still uncured. I am in dull, inactive repose; that is not happiness. And in this quietude my imagination is so stagnant, that I can no longer picture to myself what was once dearest to me. It is only in a dream that my heart often appears to me as it is — only a dream is capable of recalling to me the sweet images, of so recalling them as to reanimate my feelings; I have already told you that you are indebted to a dream for this letter. I saw you, I was with you; how it was, is too strange for me to relate to you. In one word, you were married. Is that true? I took up your kind letter, and it agrees with the time; if it is true, oh, may that be the beginning of your happiness!

"When I think of this disinterestedly, how I do rejoice to know that you, my best friend, you, before every other who envied you and fancied herself better than you, are in the arms of a worthy husband; to know that you are happy, and freed from every annoyance to which a single state, and especially your single state, was exposed! I thank my dream that it has vividly depicted your happiness to me, and the happiness of your husband, and his reward for having made you happy. Obtain me his friendship in virtue of your being my friend, for you must have all things in common, even including friends. If I may believe my dream, we shall see each other again, but I hope not so very quickly, and for my part I shall try to defer its fulfilment. If, indeed, a man can undertake anything in opposition to destiny. Formerly I wrote to you somewhat enigmatically about what was to be-

come of me. Now I may say more plainly that I am about to change my place of residence, and move farther from you. Nothing will any more remind me of Leipsic, except, perhaps, a restless dream; no friend who comes from thence; no letter. And yet I perceive that this will be no help to me. Patience, time and distance will do that which nothing else can do; they will annihilate every unpleasant impression, and give us back our friendship, with contentment with life, so that after a series of years we may see each other again with altogether different eyes, but with the same heart. Within a quarter of a year you shall have another letter from me, which will tell you of my destination and the time of my departure, and which can once more say to superfluity what I have already said a thousand times. I entreat you not to answer me any more; if you have anything more to say to me, let me know it through a friend. That is a melancholy entreaty, my best! you, the only one of all her sex, whom I cannot call friend, for that is an insignificant title compared with what I feel. I wish not to see your writing again, just as I wish not to hear your voice; it is painful enough for me that my dreams are so busy. You shall have one more letter; that promise I will sacredly keep, and so pay a part of my debts; the rest you must forgive me."

To round off this story, the following extract may be given from the last letter which has been preserved of those he wrote to her. It is dated Frankfort, January, 1770.

"That I live peacefully is all that I can say to you of myself, and vigorously, and healthily, and industriously, for I have no woman in my head. Horn and I are still good friends, but, so it happens in the world, he has his thoughts and ways, and I have my thoughts and ways, and so a week passes and we scarcely see

each other once. But, everything considered, I am at last tired of Frankfort, and at the end of March I shall leave it. I must not yet go to you, I perceive; for if I came at Easter you would not be married. And Käthchen Schönkopf I will not see again, if I am not to see her under another name. At the end of March, therefore, I go to Strasburg; if you care to know that, as I believe you do. Will you write to me to Strasburg also? You will play me no trick. For, Käthchen Schönkopf, now I know perfectly that a letter from you is as dear to me as from any hand in the world. You were always a sweet girl and will be a sweet woman. And I, I shall remain Goethe. You know what that means. If I name my name, I name my whole self, and you know that so long as I have known you I have lived only as part of you."

So fall away the young blossoms of love which have not the force to ripen into fruit. "The most lovable heart," he writes to Käthchen, with a certain bit of humour, "is that which loves the most readily; but that which easily loves also easily forgets." It was his case; he could not be happy without some one to love; but his mobile nature soon dried the tears wrung from him by her loss.

Turning once more to his domestic condition, we find him in cold, unpleasant relations with his father, who had almost excited the hatred of his other child, Cornelia, by the stern, pedantic, pedagogic way in which he treated her. The old man continued to busy himself with writing his travels in Italy, and with instructing his daughter. She, who was of a restless, excitable, almost morbid disposition, secretly rebelled against his tyranny, and made her brother the confidant of all her griefs. The poor mother had a terrible time of it, trying to pacify the children, and to stand between them and their father.

Very noticeable is one detail recorded by him. He

had fallen ill again; this time with a stomach disorder, which no therapeutic treatment in the power of Frankfort medicine seemed to mitigate. The family physician was one of those duped dupers who still clung to the great promises of Alchemy. It was whispered that he had in his possession a marvellous panacea which was only to be employed in times of greatest need, and of which, indeed, no one dared openly speak. Frau Aja, trembling for her son, besought him to employ this mysterious salt. He consented. The patient recovered, and belief in the physician's skill became more complete. Not only was the poet thus restored once more to health, he was also thereby led to the study of Alchemy, and, as he narrates, employed himself in researches after the "virgin earth." In the little study of that house in the *Hirsch-graben*, he collected his glasses and retorts, and following the directions of authorities, sought, for a time, to penetrate the mystery which then seemed so penetrable. It is characteristic of his ardent curiosity and volatility that he should have now devoted the long hours of study to works such as Welling's "Opus Mago-cabbalisticum et Theosophicum," and the unintelligible mystifications and diatribes of Paracelsus. He also tried Van Helmont (an interesting though fantastic writer), Basil Valentine, and other Alchemists. These, however, must quickly have been laid aside. They were replaced by the "Compendium" and the "Aphorisms" of Boerhaave, who at that period filled Europe with the sound of his name.[1] Goethe's studies of these writings were valuable as preparations for "Faust;" and were not without influence on his subsequent career in science.

[1] So little can contemporary verdicts settle an author's position, that Boerhaave, whose "Institutions" were thought worthy of a commentary in seven quartos by the great Haller, and whose "Aphorisms" were expanded into five quartos by the illustrious Van Swieten, is now nothing but a name.

Renewed intercourse with Fräulein von Klettenberg, together with much theological and philosophical reading, brought Religion into prominence in his thoughts. He has given a sketch of the sort of Neoplatonic Christianity into which his thoughts moulded themselves; but as this sketch was written so very many years after the period to which it relates, one cannot well accept its authenticity. For biographic purposes it is enough to indicate that, besides these Alchemic studies, Religion rose also into serious importance. Poetry seemed quite to have deserted him, although he still occasionally touched up his two plays. In a letter he humourously exposes the worthlessness of the "Bardenpoesie," then in fashion among versifiers, who tried to be patriotic and Tyrtæan by huddling together golden helmets, flashing swords, the tramp of horses, and when the verse went lame for want of a syllable, supplying an *Oh!* or *Ha!* "Make me feel," he says, "what I have not yet felt, — make me think what I have not yet thought, then I will praise you. But shrieks and noise will never supply the place of pathos."

Paoli, the Corsican patriot, passed through Frankfort at this time, and Goethe saw him in the house of Bethmann, the rich merchant; but, with this exception, Frankfort presented nothing remarkable to him, and he was impatient to escape from it. His health was sufficiently restored for his father to hope that now jurisprudence could be studied with some success; and Strasburg was the university selected for that purpose.

CHAPTER V.

STRASBURG.

He reached Strasburg on the 2d April, 1770. He was just turned twenty, and a more magnificent youth never, perhaps, entered the Strasburg gates. Long before celebrity had fixed all eyes upon him he was likened to an Apollo; and once, when he entered a dining-room, people laid down their knives and forks to stare at the beautiful youth. Pictures and busts, even when most resembling, give but a feeble indication of that which was most striking in his appearance; they give the form of features, but not the play of features; nor are they very accurate as to the form. His features were large and liberally cut, as in the fine sweeping lines of Greek art. The brow was lofty and massive, and from beneath it shone large, lustrous brown eyes of marvellous beauty, their pupils being of almost unexampled size. The slightly aquiline nose was large, and well cut. The mouth was full, with a short, arched upper lip, very sensitive and expressive. The chin and jaw boldly proportioned; and the head rested on a handsome and muscular neck.

In stature he was rather above the middle size; but although not really tall, he had the aspect of a tall man, and is usually so described, because his presence was very imposing.[1] His frame was strong, muscular,

[1] Rauch, the sculptor, who made the well-known statuette of Goethe, explained this to me as owing to his large bust and erect carriage.

yet sensitive. Dante says this contrast is in the nature of things, for —

> "Quanta la cosa é più perfetta,
> Più senta 'l bene, e così la doglienza."

Excelling in all active sports, he was almost a barometer in sensitiveness to atmospheric influences.

Such, externally, was the youth who descended at the hotel *Zum Geist*, in Strasburg, this 2d April, and who, ridding himself of the dust and *ennui* of a long imprisonment in the diligence, sallied forth to gaze at the famous Cathedral, which made a wonderful impression on him as he came up to it through the narrow streets. The Strasburg Cathedral not inaptly serves as the symbol of his early German tendencies; and its glorious tower is always connected, in my mind, with the brief but ardent endeavours of his Hellenic nature to throw itself into the old German world. German his spirit was not, but we shall see it, under the shadow of this tower, for a moment inspired with true German enthusiasm.

His lodgings secured — No. 80, on the south side of the Fish-market (now called, *le Quai de Batelier*) — he delivered his letters of introduction, and arranged to dine at a *table d'hôte* kept by two maiden ladies, named Lauth, in the Krämergasse, No. 13. The guests here were about ten in number, mostly medical. Their president was Doctor Salzmann, a clean old bachelor of eight and forty, scrupulous in his stockings, immaculate as to his shoes and buckles, with hat under his arm, and scarcely ever on his head — a neat, dapper, old gentleman, well instructed, and greatly liked by the poet, to whom he gave excellent advice, and for whom he found a valuable *repetent*.[1] In spite of the services of this

[1] The medical student will best understand what a *repetent* is, if the word be translated a *grinder*; the university student, if the

excellent repetent, jurisprudence wearied him considerably, according to his account; at first, however, he seems to have taken to it with some pleasure, as we learn by a letter, in which he tells Fräulein von Klettenberg a different story: — "Jurisprudence begins to please me very much. Thus it is with all things as with Merseburg beer; the first time we shudder at it, and having drunk it for a week, we cannot do without it." The study of jurisprudence, at any rate, did not absorb him. Schöll has published a note-book kept during this period, which reveals an astonishing activity in desultory research.[1] When we remember that the society at his *table d'hôte* was principally of medical students, we are prepared to find him eagerly throwing himself into the study of anatomy and chemistry. He attended Lobstein's lectures on Anatomy, Ehrmann's clinical lectures, with those of his son on midwifery, and Spielmann's on chemistry. Electricity occupied him, Franklin's great discovery having brought that subject into prominence. No less than nine works on electricity are set down in the Note-book to be studied. We also see from this Note-book that chromatic subjects begin to attract him — the future antagonist of Newton was preluding in the science. Alchemy still fascinated him; and he wrote to Fräulein von Klettenberg, assuring her that these mystical studies were his secret mistresses. With such a direction of his thoughts, and the influence of this pure, pious woman still operating upon him, we can imagine the disgust which followed his study of the "Système de la Nature," then making so great a noise in the world. This dead and

word be translated a *coach*. The repetent prepares students by an examination, and also by repeating and explaining in private what the professor has taught in the lecture hall.

[1] "Briefe und Aufsätze von Goethe." Herausgegeben von Adolf Schöll. In this, as in his other valuable work, Schöll is not content simply to reprint papers entrusted to him, but enriches them by his own careful, accurate editing.

dull exposition of an atheism as superficial as it was dull, must have been every way revolting to him: irritating to his piety, and unsatisfying to his reason. Voltaire's wit and Rousseau's sarcasms he could copy into his note-book, especially when they pointed in the direction of tolerance; but he who could read Bayle, Voltaire, and Rousseau with delight, turned from the "Système de la Nature," with scorn; especially at a time when we find him taking the sacrament, and trying to keep up an acquaintance with the pious families to which Fräulein von Klettenberg had introduced him. I say *trying*, because even his good-will could not long withstand their dulness and narrowness; he was forced to give them up and confessed so much to his friend.

Shortly after his arrival in Strasburg, namely, in May, 1770, an event occurred which agitated the town, and gave him an opportunity of seeing, for the first time, Raphael's cartoons. Marie Antoinette, about to become the Dauphiness of France, was to pass through on her way to Paris. On a small island on the Rhine a building was erected for her reception; and this was adorned with tapestries worked after the cartoons. These tapestries roused his enthusiasm; but he was shocked to find that they were placed in the side chambers, while the chief salon was hung with tapestries worked after pictures by modern French artists. That Raphael should thus be thrown into a subordinate position was less exasperating to him than the *subjects* chosen from the modern artists. "These pictures were the history of Jason, Medea, and Creusa — consequently, a story of a most wretched marriage. To the left of the throne was seen the bride struggling against a horrible death, surrounded by persons full of sympathetic grief; to the right stood the father, horror-struck at the murdered babes at his feet; whilst the fury, in her dragon car, drove through the air."

All the ideas which he had learned from Oeser were outraged by this selection. He did not quarrel so much with the arrangement which placed Christ and the Apostles in side chambers, since he had thereby been enabled to enjoy the sight of them. "But a blunder like that of the grand saloon put me altogether out of my self-possession, and with loud and vehement cries I called to my comrades to witness the insult against feeling and taste. 'What!' I exclaimed, regardless of bystanders, 'can they so thoughtlessly place before the eyes of a young queen, on her first setting foot in her dominions, the representation of the most horrible marriage perhaps that ever was consummated! Is there among the architects and decorators no one man who understands that pictures *represent something* — that they work upon the mind and feelings — that they produce impressions and excite forebodings? It is as if they had sent a ghastly spectre to meet this lovely, and and as we hear most joyous, lady at the very frontiers!'" To him, indeed, pictures meant something; they were realities to him, because he had the true artistic nature. But to the French architects, as to the Strasburg officials, pictures were pictures — ornaments betokening more or less luxury and taste, flattering the eye, but never touching the soul.

Goethe was right; and omen-lovers afterward read in that picture the dark foreshadowing of her destiny. But no one then could have foreseen that her future career would be less triumphant than her journey from Vienna to Paris. That smiling, happy, lovely princess of fifteen, whose grace and beauty extort expressions of admiration from every beholder, as she wends her way along roads lined with the jubilant peasantry leaving their fields to gaze upon her, through streets strewn with nosegays, through triumphal arches, and rows of maidens garlanded, awaiting her arrival to offer her spring-flowers as symbols — can her joy be for a mo-

ment dashed by a pictured sorrow? Can omens have a dark significance to her?

"I still vividly remember," says Goethe, "the beauteous and lofty mien, as charming as it was dignified, of the young princess. Plainly visible in her carriage, she seemed to be jesting with her female attendants respecting the throng which poured forth to meet her train." Scarcely had the news of her happy arrival in the capital reached them, than it was followed by the intelligence of the accident which had disturbed the festivities of her marriage. Goethe's thoughts naturally recurred to the ominous pictures: a nature less superstitious would not have been entirely unmoved by such a coincidence.

"The excitement over, the Strasburgers fell into their accustomed tranquillity. The mighty stream of courtly magnificence had now flowed by, and left me no other longing than that for the tapestries of Raphael, which I could have contemplated and worshipped every hour. Luckily my earnest desires succeeded in interesting several persons of consequence, so that the tapestries were not taken down till the very last moment."

The reëstablished quiet left him time for studies again. In a letter of this date he intimates that he is "so improved in knowledge of Greek as almost to read Homer without a translation. I am a week older; *that* you know says a great deal with me, not because I do much, but many things." Among these many things, we must note his ardent search through mystical metaphysical writings for the material on which his insatiable appetite could feed. Strange revelations in this direction are afforded by his Note-book. On one page there is a passage from Thomas â Kempis, followed by a list of mystical works to be read; on another page, sarcastic sentences from Rousseau and Voltaire; on a third, a reference to Tauler. The book contains an analysis of the "Phædon" of Moses Mendelssohn, con-

trasted with that of Plato; and a defence of Giordano Bruno against the criticism of Bayle.

Apropos of Bruno, one may remark the early tendency of Goethe's mind toward Nature-worship. Tacitus, indeed, noticed the tendency as national.[1] The scene in Frankfort, where the boy-priest erected his Pantheistic altar, will help to explain the interest he must have felt in the glimpse Bayle gave him of the great Pantheist of the sixteenth century — the brilliant and luckless Bruno, who after teaching the heresy of Copernicus at Rome and Oxford, after combating Aristotle and gaining the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney, was publicly burnt on the 17th February, 1600, in the presence of the Roman crowd: expiating thus the crime of teaching that the earth moved, the Church having declared it to be stable. A twofold interest attached itself to the name of Bruno. He was a martyr of Philosophy, and his works were rare; every one abused him, few had read him. He was almost as much hated as Spinoza, and scarcely any one knew the writings they reviled. The rarity of Bruno's works made them objects of bibliopolic luxury; some were among the black swans of literature. The "Spaccio" had been sold for thirty pounds in England, and three hundred florins in Holland. Hamann, whom Herder and Goethe ardently admired, searched Italy and Germany for the "De la Causa" and "Del Infinito" in vain. Forbidden fruit is tempting; but when the fruit is rare, as well as forbidden, the attraction is irresistible.[2] Pantheism, which captivates poeti-

[1] What Tacitus there represents as a more exalted creed than anthropomorphism, was really a lower form of religious conception — the Fetichism, which in primitive races precedes Polytheism.

[2] Since then the works have been made accessible through the cheap and excellent edition collected by A. Wagner: "Opere di Giordano Bruno Nolano." 2 vols. Leipsic: 1830. But I do not observe that, now they are accessible, many persons interest themselves enough in Bruno to read them.

cal minds, has a poetical grandeur in the form given to it by Bruno which would have allured Goethe had his tendencies not already lain in that direction. To preach that doctrine Bruno became a homeless wanderer, and his wanderings ended in martyrdom. Nothing could shake his faith; as he loftily says, "con questa filosofia l'anima mi s'aggrandisce e mi si magnifica l'intelletto."

Goethe's notes on Bayle's criticism may be given here, as illustrating his metaphysical opinions and his mastery of French composition. We can be certain of the authenticity of the French: in spite of inaccuracies and inelegancies, it is fluent and expressive, and gives one the idea of greater conversational command of the language than he reports of himself.

"Je ne suis pas du sentiment de M. Bayle à l'égard de Jor. Brunus, et je ne trouve ni d'impiété ni d'absurdité dans les passages qu'il cite, quoique d'ailleurs je ne prétende pas d'excuser cet homme paradoxe. 'L'uno, l'infinito, lo ente e quello ch' è in tutto, e per tutto anzi è l'*istezzo* ubique. E che *cosse* la infinita dimenzione per non essere magnitudine coincide coll' individuo, come la infinita moltitudine per non esser numero coincide coll' unita.' *Giord. Brun. Epist. Ded. del Tratt. de la Causa Principio et Uno.*[1]

"Ce passage mériteroit une explication et une recherche plus philosophiques que le disc. de M. Bayle. Il est plus facile de prononcer un passage obscur et contraire à nos notions que de le déchiffrer, et que de suivre les idées d'un grand homme. Il est de même du passage où il plaisante sur une idée de Brunus, que je n'applaudis pas entièrement, si peu que les précé-

[1] "The One, the Infinite, the Being, and that which is in all things is everywhere the same. Thus infinite extension not being magnitude coincides with the individual, as infinite multitude because it is not number coincides with unity." The words in italics are given as in Goethe — carelessly copied for *l'istesso* and *cosi*. See Bruno, "Opere," 1, p. 211, ed. Wagner.

dentes, mais que je crois du moins profondes et peut-être fécondes pour un observateur judicieux. Notez, je vous prie, de B. une absurdité: il dit que ce n'est point l'être qui fait qu'il y a beaucoup de choses, mais que cette multitude consiste dans ce qui paroît sur la superfice de la substance."

In the same Note-book there is a remarkable comment on a chapter in Fabricius ("Bibliog. Antiq.") which Goethe has written in Latin, and which may be thus rendered: "To discuss God apart from Nature is both difficult and perilous; it is as if we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the medium of the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity, as it appears to me, of accusing those of absurdity who philosophically have united God with the world. For everything which exists necessarily pertains to the essence of God, because God is the one Being whose existence includes all things. Nor does the Holy Scripture contradict this, although we differently interpret its dogmas each according to his views. All antiquity thought in the same way; an unanimity which to me has great significance. To me the judgment of so many men speaks highly for the rationality of the doctrine of emanation; though I am of no sect, and grieve much that Spinoza should have coupled this pure doctrine with his detestable errors."[1] This reference to Spinoza, whom he

[1] I subjoin the original, as the reader may not be displeased to see a specimen of Goethe's Latin composition: Separatim de Deo, et natura rerum disserere difficile et pericolosum est, eodem modo quam si de corpore et anima sejunctim cogitamus. Animam nonnisi mediante corpore, Deum nonnisi perspecta natura cognoscimus; hinc absurdum mihi videtur, eos absurditatis accusare, qui ratiocinatione maxime philosophica Deum cum mundo conjunxere. Quæ enim sunt omnia ad essentiam Dei pertinere necesse est, cum Deus sit unicum existens et omnia comprehendat. Nec Sacer Codex nostræ sententiæ refragatur, cujus tamen dicta ab unoquoque in sententiam suam torqueri patienter ferimus. Omnis antiquitatis ejusdem fuit sententiæ, cui consensui quam multum tribuo. Testimonio enim mihi est virorum tantorum

subsequently reverenced as one of his best teachers, is easily explicable when we reflect that he then knew no more of Spinoza than could be gathered from Bayle.

Time was not all consumed by these studies, multifarious as they were. Lively Strasburg had its amusements, and Goethe joined his friend Salzmann in many a pleasant party. The various pleasure-grounds and public gardens were always crowded with promenaders, and there the mixture of the old national costume with modern fashions gave charming variety to the scene, and made the pretty women still more attractive.

He found himself in the presence of two sharply defined nationalities. Alsatia, and especially Strasburg, although belonging to France, still preserved its old German character. Eight hundred years of national life were not to be set aside at once, when it pleased the powers, at the peace of Westphalia, to say that Alsatia should be French. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the old German speech, costume, and manners were so dominant, that a Frankforter, or a Mainzer, found himself at once at home there. But just before the outbreak of the French Revolution the gradual influx of officials brought about a sort of fashion in French costume. Milliners, friseurs, and dancing masters had done their best, or their worst, to "polish" society. But the surface was rough, and did not take kindly to this polishing. Side by side with the French *employé* there was the old German professor, who obstinately declined to acquire more of the foreigners' language than sufficed for daily needs and household matters; for the rest he kept sturdily Teutonic. Even in costume the imitation was mainly

sententia rectæ rationi quam convenientissimum fuisse systema emanativum, licet nulli subscribere velim sectæ, valdeque doleam Spinozismum, teterrimis erroribus ex eodem fonte manantibus, doctrinæ huic purissimæ iniquissimum fratrem natum esse.

confined to the upper classes.[1] Goethe describes the maidens of the bourgeoisie still wearing their hair in one long plait, falling behind, and with petticoats of picturesque but perilous brevity.

Salzmann introduced him to several families, and thus more than by all his advice helped to soften down the exuberant expression of animal spirits which very often sinned against quiet conventionalities; for by inducing him to frequent society, it forced him to learn that demeanour which society imperatively demands. In "Wilhelm Meister" great stress is laid upon the culture necessary to fit a man of genius for society; and one of the great motives advanced for the pursuance of a theatrical career is the facility it affords a man of gaining address.

An excitable, impetuous youth, ambitious of shining in society, yet painfully conscious of the unsuitableness of his previous training for the attainment of that quietness deemed so necessary, would require to attend to every trifle which might affect his deportment. Thus, although he had magnificent hair, he allowed the hairdresser to tie it up in a bag, and affix a false queue. This obliged him to remain propped up powdered, from an early hour of the morning, and also to keep from overheating himself and from violent gestures, lest he should betray the false ornament. "This restraint contributed much toward making me for a time more gentle and polite in my bearing; and I got accustomed to shoes and stockings, and to carrying my hat under my arm; I did not, however, neglect wearing fine understockings as a protection against the Rhine gnats." To these qualifications as a cavalier, he added those of an excellent swordsman and rider. With his fellow students he had abundant exercise in the use of the rapier; and prompted, I presume, by his restless desire to do all that his friends did, he began to learn the violoncello!

[1] Stoeber: "Der Aktuar Salzmann," 1855, p. 7.

His circle of friends widened; and even that of his fellow boarders in the Krämergasse increased. Among the latter, two deserve special mention — Jung Stilling and Franz Lerse. Stilling has preserved an account of their first meeting.[1] About twenty were assembled at dinner, when a young man entered the room in high spirits, whose large, clear eyes, splendid brow, and beautifully proportioned figure, irresistibly drew the attention of Troost and Stilling. The former remarked, "That must be an extraordinary man!" Stilling assented; but feared lest they might be somewhat annoyed by him, he looked such a wild, rollicking fellow. Meanwhile they learned that this student, whose unconstrained freedom and *aplomb* made them draw under their shells, was named Herr Goethe. Dinner proceeded. Goethe, who sat opposite Stilling, had completely the lead in conversation, without once seeking it. At length one of the company began quizzing the wig of poor Stilling, and the fun was relished by all except Troost, Salzmann, and one who, indignantly reproving them for making game of so inoffensive a person, silenced the ridicule immediately; this was none other than the large-eyed student whose appearance had excited Stilling's uneasiness. The friendship thus begun was continued by the sympathy and tender affectionateness Goethe always displayed toward the simple, earnest, and unfriended thinker, whose deep religious convictions, and trusting, childlike nature, singularly interested him. Goethe was never tired of listening to the story of his life. Instinctively he sought on all sides to penetrate the mysteries of humanity, and, by probing every man's experience, to make it his own. Here was a poor charcoal-burner, who from tailoring had passed to keeping a school; that failing, he had resumed his needle; and having joined a religious sect, had, in silent communion with his own soul, gained for

[1] Stilling's "Wanderschaft," p. 158.

himself a sort of culture which raised him above the ordinary height of men;—what was there in his life or opinions to captivate the riotous, skeptical, prosperous student? There was *earnestness* — there was *genuineness*. Goethe was eminently qualified to become the friend of one who held opposite convictions to his own, for his tolerance was large and genuine, and he respected every real conviction. Sympathising with Stilling, listening to him, and dexterously avoiding any interference with his religious faith, he was not only enabled to be his friend, but also to learn quietly and surely the inner nature of such men.

Franz Lerse attracted him by different qualities; upright manliness, scrupulous orderliness, dry humour, and a talent for reconciling antagonists. As a memorial of their friendship his name is given to the gallant fellow in "Götz von Berlichingen," who knows how to subordinate himself with dignity.

Salzmann had some years before founded a sort of club, or, as Stilling calls it, *Gesellschaft der schönen Wissenschaften*, the object of which was to join a book society with a debating club. In 1763–64 this club had among its members no less a person than O. F. Müller, the renowned helminthologist; and now in 1770–71 it numbered, among others, Goethe, Lerse, Jung Stilling, Lenz, Weyland, and, as a guest, was honoured by the presence of Herder, who was then writing his work on the "Origin of Language."

Generally speaking, Goethe is so liberal in information about his friends and contemporaries, and so sparing of precise indications of his own condition, that we are left in the dark respecting much that would be welcome knowledge. There is one thing mentioned by him which is very significant; although his health was sufficiently established for ordinary purposes, he still suffered from great irritability. Loud sounds were disagreeable to him; diseased objects aroused loathing

and horror. And he was especially troubled with giddiness, which came over him whenever he looked down from a height. All these infirmities he resolved to conquer, and that somewhat violently. In the evening when they beat the tattoo, he went close to the drums, though the powerful rolling and beating of so many seemed enough to make his heart burst in his bosom. Alone he ascended the highest pinnacle of the cathedral, and sat in what is called the neck, under the crown, for a quarter of an hour before venturing to step out again into the open air. Standing on a platform, scarcely an ell square, he saw before him a boundless prospect, the church and the supports of his standing place being concealed by the ornaments. He felt exactly as if carried up in a balloon. These painful sensations he repeated until they became quite indifferent; he subsequently derived great advantage from this conquest, in mountain excursions and geological studies. Anatomy was also of double value, as it taught him to tolerate the most repulsive sights whilst satisfying his thirst for knowledge. He succeeded so well, that no hideous sight could disturb his self-possession. He also sought to steel himself against the terrors of imagination. The awful and shuddering impressions of darkness in churchyards, solitary places, churches and chapels by night, he contrived to render indifferent — so much so, that when a desire came over him to recall in such scenes the pleasing shudder of youth, he could scarcely succeed even by the strangest and most terrific images.

Two love poems, written during this year — "Stirbt der Fuchs so gilt der Balg" and "Blinde Kuh" — put us on the scent of flirtations. He is silent respecting Dorilis and Theresa in his Autobiography; and in ordinary cases a biographer would accept that silence without drawing any conclusion from the poems. No one hereafter will think of identifying the Claribels, Isabels, and Madelines, with young ladies whom our

poets met in society, and who led captive their inconstant hearts. With Goethe it is otherwise. All his poems grow out of occasions; they are flowers of which circumstance is the earth. Utterances of real feelings to real beings, they are unlike all coquettings with imaginary beauties. His poems are evidences.[1] Unhappily, the bare *fact* in this instance is all we can discover.

One flirtation, however, was not so easily effaced. His strange didactic father had instructed him and his sister in dancing, a task which seems rather ludicrous as we picture to ourselves the cold, formal, rigorous old Frankforter. He was perfectly unconscious of any incongruity. With the utmost gravity he drilled them into a minuet, playing to them on the flageolet. Goethe's dancing had been for some time neglected, and when he stood up to a minuet once at Leipsic, he got through it so awkwardly as to draw upon himself the suspicion of having done so to prevent being invited again.

A handsome youth unable to dance was an anomaly in Strasburg. Not a Sunday evening passed without the pleasure-gardens being crowded with gay dancers; galas frequently enlivened the week; and the merry Alsatians seldom met but they commenced spinning round in the waltz. Into these gardens, amidst these waltzers, Goethe constantly went — yet could not waltz. He resolved at length to learn. A friend recommended him to a dancing-master of repute, who soon pronounced himself gratified with the progress made.

This master, a dry, precise, but amiable Frenchman, had two daughters, who assisted him at his lessons,

[1] I find Viehoff insisting on a similar clue; he supposes Dorilis and Theresa (probably one and the same person) to be real persons, and that Goethe knew them through Salzmann. Mr. Demmler argues with some force that Dorilis can be none other than Frederika — of whom more anon.

acting both as partners and correctors. Two pretty girls, both under twenty, charming with French vivacity and coquetry, could not fail to interest the young poet; nor could the graceful, handsome youth fail to create an impression on two girls whose lives were somewhat lonesome. Symptoms of this interest very soon showed themselves. The misfortune was that the state of their feelings made what dramatists call "a situation." Goethe's heart inclined toward Emilia, who loved another; while that of Lucinda, the eldest sister, was bestowed upon him. Emilia was afraid to trust herself too much with him; but Lucinda was always at hand, ready to waltz with him, to protract his lesson, or to show him little attentions. There were not many pupils; so that he often remained after his lesson to chat away the time, or to read aloud to them a romance: dangerous moments!

He saw how things stood, yet puzzled himself about the reserve of the younger sister. The cause of it came out at last. One evening, after the dance was over, Lucinda detained him in the dancing-room, telling him that her sister was in the sitting-room with a fortune-teller, who was disclosing the condition of a lover to whom the girl's heart was given. "Mine," said Lucinda, "is free, and I must get used to its being slighted."

He tried to parry this thrust by divers little compliments; and, indiscreetly enough, advised her to try her own fate with the fortune-teller, offering to do the same himself. Lucinda did not like that tampering with fate, declaring that the disclosures of the oracle were too true to be made a matter of sport. Probably this piqued him into a little more earnestness than he had shown, for ultimately he persuaded her to go into the sitting-room with him. They found Emilia much pleased with the information that she had received from the pythoness, who was highly flattered at the

new devotee to her shrine. A handsome reward was promised her if she should disclose the truth. With the customary ceremonial she began to tell the fortune of the elder sister. She hesitated. "Oh, I see," said Emilia, "that you have something unpleasant to tell." Lucinda turned pale, but said, "Speak out; it will not cost me my life." The fortune-teller heaved a deep sigh, and proceeded with her disclosures. Lucinda, she said, was in love, but her love was not returned; another person standing in the way. And she went on with more in the same style. It is not difficult to imagine that the sybil should readily enough interpret this little drama which was then acting by the youth and two girls before her eyes. Lucinda showed evidence of distress; and the old woman endeavoured to give a better turn to the affair by throwing out hopes of letters and money. "Letters," said Lucinda, "I do not expect; and money I do not want. If I love as you say, I have a right to be loved in return." The fortune-teller shuffled the cards again; but that only made matters worse; the girl now appeared in the oracular vision in greater trouble, her lover at a greater distance. A third shuffle of the cards was still worse; Lucinda burst into a passionate flood of tears, and rushed from the room. "Follow her," said Emilia, "and comfort her." But he hesitated, not seeing what comfort he could well give, as he could not assure her of some return for her affection. "Let us go together," he replied. Emilia doubted whether her presence would do good; but she consented. Lucinda had locked herself in; and paying the old woman for her work, Goethe left the house.

He had scarcely courage to revisit the sisters; but on the third day Emilia sent for him, and he received his lesson as usual. Lucinda, however, was absent; and when he asked for her, Emilia told him that she was in bed, declaring that she should die. She had

thrown out great reproaches against him for his ungrateful behaviour. "And yet I do not know," said he, "that I am guilty of having expressed any sort of affection for her. I know somebody who can bear me witness of that." Emilia smiled. "I comprehend," she said; "but if we are not careful we shall all find ourselves in a disastrous position. Forgive me if I say that you must not go on with your lessons. My father says that he is ashamed to take your money any longer, unless you mean to pursue the art of dancing; since you know already what is needed by a young man in the world." "Do you tell me to avoid the house, Emilia?" he asked. "Yes," she said; "but not on my own account. When you had gone the other day, I had the cards cut for you; and the same answer was given thrice. You were surrounded by friends, and all sorts of good fortune; but the ladies kept aloof from you; my poor sister stood farthest of all. One other constantly came near to you; but never close; for a third person, a man, always came between. I will confess that I thought I was myself this second lady; and now you will understand my advice. I have promised myself to another, and until now I loved him more than any one. Yet your presence might become more dangerous to me than it has been; and then what a position would be yours between two sisters, one of whom you would have made miserable by your affection, and the other by your coldness." She held out her hand and bade him farewell; she then led him to the door; and in token that it was to be their last meeting, she threw herself upon his bosom and kissed him tenderly. Just as he had put his arms round her, a side door flew open, and her sister, in a light but decorous dressing-gown, rushed in, crying, "You shall not be the only one to take leave of him!" Emilia released him. Lucinda took him in her arms, pressed her black locks against his cheeks;

remained thus for some time, and then drawing back looked him earnestly in the face. He took her hand and tried to muster some kind expressions to soothe her; but she turned away, walked passionately up and down the room, and then threw herself in great agitation into a corner of the sofa. Emilia went up to her, but was violently repulsed; and a scene ensued, which had in it, says the principal performer, nothing really theatrical, although it could only be represented on the stage by an actor of sensibility. Lucinda poured forth reproaches against her sister. "This," said she, "is not the first heart beating for me that you have wheedled away. Was it not so with the one now betrothed to you, while I looked on and bore it? I, only, know the tears it cost me; and now you would rob me of this one. How many would you manage to keep at once? I am frank and easy-tempered, and all think they understand me at once, and may slight me. You are secret and quiet, and make people wonder at what may be concealed behind: there is nothing there but a cold, selfish heart, sacrificing everything to itself." Emilia seated herself by her sister, and remained silent, while Lucinda, growing more excited, began to betray matters not quite proper for him to hear. Emilia made a sign to him to withdraw. But Lucinda caught the sound, sprang towards him, and then remained lost in thought. "I know that I have lost you," she said: "I claim you no more;— but neither shall you have him." So saying, she grasped him wildly by the head, with her hands thrust among his hair, pressed her face to his, and kissed him repeatedly on the mouth. "Now fear my curse! Woe upon woe, for ever and ever, to her who for the first time after me kisses these lips! Dare to sport with him now! Heaven hears my curse! And you, begone, begone while you may!"

He hurried from the house never to return. Is not this narrative like a scene in a novel? The excited

little Frenchwoman — the bewildered poet — the old fortune-teller, and the dry old dancing-master, faintly sketched, in the background, are the sort of figures a novelist would delight in.

CHAPTER VI.

HERDER AND FREDERIKA.

ONE thing very noticeable in this Strasburg period is the thoroughly *German* culture it gave him. In those days culture was mostly classical and French. Classical studies had never exercised much influence over him; and, indeed, throughout his career, he approached antiquity more through Art than through the Greek and Roman writers. To the French, on the other hand, he owed a great deal both of direction and material. A revival of the old German nationality was, however, actively agitated at this epoch. Klopstock, Lessing, Herder, Shakespeare, and Ossian were the rivals opposed to France. A feeling of national pride gave its momentum to this change in taste. Gothic art began to be considered the true art of modern times.

At the *table d'hôte* our friends, all German, not only banished the French language, but made a point of being in every way unlike the French. French literature was ridiculed as affected, insincere, unnatural. The truth, homely strength, and simplicity of the German character were set against this literature of courtiers. Goethe had been dabbling in mediæval studies, had been awestruck by the cathedral, had been inspired by Shakespeare, and had seen Lessing's iconoclastic wit scattering the pretensions of French poetry. Moreover, he had read the biography of "Götz von Berlichingen;" and the picture of that Titan in an age of anarchy which he had conjured up from the meagre materials

had so impressed itself upon him, that it slowly grew into a dramatic conception. The legend of "Faust" especially attracted him, now that he was in the condition into which youths so readily fall after a brief and unsatisfactory attempt to penetrate the mysteries of science. "Like him, too, I had swept the circle of science, and had early learned its vanity; like him I had trodden various paths, always returning unsatisfied." The studies of alchemy, medicine, jurisprudence, philosophy, and theology, which had so long engaged him, must have made him feel quite a personal interest in the old Faust legend.

In such a mood the acquaintance with Herder was of great importance. Herder was five years his senior, and had already created a name for himself. He came to Strasburg with an eye-disease, which obliged him to remain there the whole winter, during the cure. Goethe, charmed with his vigorous intellect, attended on him during the operation, and sat with him morning and evening during his convalescence, listening to the wisdom which fell from those lips, as a pupil listens to a much-loved master. Great was the contrast between the two men, yet the difference did not separate them. Herder was decided, clear, pedagogic; knowing his own aims, and fond of communicating his ideas. Goethe was skeptical and inquiring. Herder, rude, sarcastic, and bitter; Goethe amiable and infinitely tolerant. The bitterness which repelled so many friends from Herder, could not repel Goethe: it was a peculiarity of his to be at all times able to learn from antagonistic natures; meeting them on the common ground of sympathy, he avoided those subjects on which they would inevitably clash. It is somewhat curious that although Herder took a great liking to his young friend, and was grateful for his kind attentions, he seems to have had little suspicion of his genius. The only fragment we have of that period, which gives us a hint of

his opinion, is in a letter to his bride, dated February, 1772: "Goethe is really a good fellow, only somewhat light and sparrow-like,[1] for which I incessantly reproach him. He was almost the only one who visited me during my illness in Strasburg whom I saw with pleasure; and I believe I influenced him in more ways than one to his advantage." His own vanity may have stood between Goethe and himself; or he may have been too conscious of his young friend's defects to think much of his genius. "Herder, Herder," Goethe writes to him from Strasburg, "be to me what you are. If I am destined to be your planet, so will I be, and willingly and truly, a friendly moon to your earth. But you must feel that I would rather be Mercury, the last, the smallest of the seven, to revolve with you about the sun, than the first of the five which turn round Saturn."[2] In one of the many inaccuracies of his Autobiography, he says that he withheld from Herder his intention of writing "Götz;" but there is a passage in Herder's work on German Art, addressed to Goethe, which very plainly alludes to this intention.[3] Such oversights are inevitable in retracing the minor details of the past.

There was indeed contrast enough between the two, in age, character, intellect, and knowledge, to have prevented any very close sympathy. Herder loved the abstract and ideal in men and things, and was for ever criticising and complaining of individuals, because they did not realise his ideal standard. What Gervinus says

[1] *Nur etwas leicht und spatzenmässig:* I translate the phrase, leaving the reader to interpret it; for twenty Germans have given twenty different meanings to the word "sparrow-like," some referring to the chattering of sparrows, others to the boldness of sparrows, others to the curiosity of sparrows, and others to the libertine character of sparrows. Whether Herder meant gay, volatile, forward, careless, or amorous, I cannot decide.

[2] "Aus Herder's Nachlass," 1, p. 28.

[3] Herder: "Von deutschen Art und Kunst," p. 112.

of Herder's relation to Lessing, namely, that he loved him when he considered him as a whole, but could never cease plaguing him about details, holds good also of his relation to Goethe through life. Goethe had little of that love of mankind in the abstract, which to Herder, and so many others, seems the substitute for individual love, — which animates philanthropists who are sincere in their philanthropy, even when they are bad husbands, bad fathers, bad brothers, and bad friends. He had, instead of this, the most overflowing love for individual men. His concrete and affectionate nature was more attracted to men than to abstractions. It is because many do not recognise this that they declaim against him for his "indifference" to political matters, to history, and to many of the great questions which affect Humanity.

Herder's influence on Goethe was manifold, but mainly in the direction of poetry. He taught him to look at the Bible as a magnificent illustration of the truth that Poetry is the product of a national spirit, not the privilege of a cultivated few. From the poetry of the Hebrew People he led him to other illustrations of national song; and here Homer and Ossian were placed highest. It was at this time that Ossian made the tour of Europe, and everywhere met believers. Goethe was so delighted with the wild northern singer, that he translated the song of "Selma," and afterward incorporated it in "Werther." Besides Shakespeare and Ossian, he also learned, through Herder, to appreciate the "Vicar of Wakefield;" and the exquisite picture there painted, he was now to see living in the parsonage of Frederika's father.

Upon the broad and lofty gallery of the Strasburg Cathedral he and his companions often met to salute the setting sun with brimming goblets of Rhine wine. The calm wide landscape stretched itself for miles before them, and they pointed out the several spots which

"Upon the broad and lofty gallery"

Photogravure from the drawing by W. Friedrich

memory endeared to each. One spot, above all others, has interest for us — Sesenheim, the home of Frederika. Of all the women who enjoyed the distinction of Goethe's love, none seem to me so fascinating as Frederika. Her idyllic presence is familiar to every lover of German literature, through the charming episode of the Autobiography, over which the poet lingered with peculiar delight. The secretary is now (1854) living to whom this episode was dictated, and he remembers vividly how much affected Goethe seemed to be as these scenes revisited memory; walking up and down the room, with his hands behind him, he often stopped in his walk, and paused in the dictation; then after a long silence, followed by a deep sigh, he continued the narrative in a lower tone.

Weyland, a fellow boarder, had often spoken of a clergyman who, with his wife and two amiable daughters, lived near Drusenheim, a village about sixteen miles from Strasburg. Early in October, 1770, Weyland proposed to his friend to accompany him on a visit to the worthy pastor. It was agreed between them that Weyland should introduce him under the guise of a shabby theological student. His love of incognito often prompted him to such disguises. In the present instance he borrowed some old clothes, and combed his hair in such a way that when Weyland saw him he burst out into a fit of laughter. They set forth in high glee. At Drusenheim they stopped, Weyland to make himself spruce, Goethe to rehearse his part. Riding across the meadows to Sesenheim, they left their horses at the inn, and walked leisurely toward the parsonage, — an old and somewhat dilapidated farmhouse, but very picturesque, and very still. They found pastor Brion at home, and were welcomed by him in a friendly manner. The rest of the family were in the fields. Weyland went after them, leaving Goethe to discuss parish interests with the pastor, who

soon grew confidential. Presently the wife appeared; and she was followed by the eldest daughter bouncing into the room, inquiring after Frederika, and hurrying away again to seek her.

Refreshments were brought, and old acquaintances were talked over with Weyland, — Goethe listening. Then the daughter returned, uneasy at not having found Frederika. This little domestic fuss about Frederika prepared the poet for her appearance. At length she came in. Both girls wore the national costume, with its short, white, full skirt and furbelow, not concealing the neatest of ankles, a tight bodice, and black taffeta apron. Frederika's straw hat hung on her arm; and the beautiful braids of her fair hair drooped on a delicate white neck. Merry blue eyes, and a piquant little *nez retroussé*, completed her attractions. In gazing on this bright young creature, then only sixteen, Goethe felt ashamed of his disguise. It hurt his *amour propre* to appear thus before her like a bookish student, shorn of all personal advantages. Meanwhile conversation rattled on between Weyland and his family. Endless was the list of uncles, aunts, nieces, cousins, gossips, and guests they had something to say about, leaving him completely excluded from the conversation. Frederika, seeing this, seated herself by him, and with charming frankness began to talk to him. Music was lying on the harpsichord; she asked him if he played, and on his modestly qualified affirmative begged him "to favour them." Her father, however, suggested that *she* ought to begin by a song. She sat down to the harpsichord, which was somewhat out of tune, and, in a provincial style, performed several pieces, such as then were thought enchanting. After this she began to sing. The song was tender and melancholy, but she was apparently not in the mood, for acknowledging her failure she rose and said, "If I sing badly it is not the fault of my harpsichord

nor of my teacher: let us go into the open air, and then you shall hear my Alsatian and Swiss songs." Into the air they went, and soon her merry voice carolled forth:

> "I come from a forest as dark as the night,
> And believe me, I love thee, my only delight.
> Ei, ja, ei, ja, ei, ei, ei, ei, ja, ja, ja!" [1]

He was already a captive.

His tendency to see pictures and poetry in the actual scenes of life, here made him see realised the Wakefield family. If pastor Brion did not accurately represent Mr. Primrose, yet he might stand for him; the elder daughter for Olivia, the younger for Sophia; and when at supper a youth came into the room, Goethe involuntarily exclaimed, "What, Moses too!" A very merry supper they had; so merry that Weyland, fearing lest wine and Frederika should make his friend betray himself, proposed a walk in the moonlight. Weyland offered his arm to Salome, the elder daughter (always named *Olivia* in the Autobiography), Frederika took Goethe's arm. Youth and moonlight — need one say more? Already he began to scrutinise her tone in speaking of cousins and neighbours, jealous lest it should betray an affection. But her blithe spirit was as yet untroubled, and he listened in delicious silence to her unembarrassed loquacity.

On retiring for the night the friends had much to talk over. Weyland assured him the incognito had not been betrayed; on the contrary, the family had inquired after the young Goethe, of whose joviality and eccentricities they had often heard. And now came the tremulous question; was Frederika engaged? No. That was a relief! Had she ever been in love?

[1] The entire song is to be found in the "Sesenheimer Liederbuch" and in Viehoff: "Goethe Erläutert," vol. i. p. 110.

No. Still better! Thus chatting, they sat till deep in the night as friends chat on such occasions, with hearts too full and brains too heated for repose. At dawn Goethe was awake, impatient to see Frederika with the dew of morning on her cheek. While dressing he looked at his costume in disgust, and tried in vain to remedy it. His hair could be managed; but when his arms were thrust into his threadbare coat, the sleeves of which were ludicrously short, he looked pitiable; Weyland, peeping at him from under the coverlet, giggled. In his despair he resolved to ride back to Strasburg, and return in his own costume. On the way another plan suggested itself. He exchanged clothes with the son of the landlord at the Drusenheim Inn, a youth of his own size; corked his eyebrows, imitated the son's gait and speech, and returned to the parsonage the bearer of a cake. This second disguise also succeeded, so long as he kept at a distance; but Frederika running up to him and saying, "George, what do you here?" he was forced to reveal himself. "Not George, but one who asks forgiveness." "You shocking creature!" she exclaimed, "how you frightened me!" The jest was soon explained and forgiven, not only by Frederika, but by the family, who laughed heartily at it.

Gaily passed the day; the two hourly falling deeper and deeper in love. Passion does not chronicle by time: moments are hours, hours years, when two hearts are rushing into one. It matters little, therefore, that the Autobiography speaks only of two days passed in this happy circle, whereas a letter of his says distinctly he was there "some days — *einige Tage*" (*less* than three cannot be understood by *einige*). He was there long enough to fall in love, and to captivate the whole family by his gaiety, obligingness, and poetic gifts. He had given them a taste of his quality as a romancist, by telling the story of "The New Melusina"

(subsequently published in the "Wanderjahr"). He had also interested himself in the pastor's plans for the rebuilding of the parsonage, and proposed to take away the sketches with him to Strasburg.

The pain of separation was lightened by the promise of speedy reunion. He returned to Strasburg with new life in his heart. He had not long before written to a friend that for the first time he knew what it was to be happy without his heart being engaged. Pleasant people and manifold studies left him no time for *feeling*. "Enough, my present life is like a sledge journey, splendid and sounding, but with just as little for the heart as it has much for eyes and ears." Another tone runs through his letters now, to judge from the only one which has been recovered.[1] It is addressed to Frederika, dated the 15th October.

"DEAR NEW FRIEND: — I dare to call you so; for if I can trust the language of eyes, then did mine in the first glance read the hope of this new friendship in yours — and for our hearts I will answer. You, good and gentle as I know you, will you not show some favour to one who loves you so?

"Dear, dear friend, that I have something to say to you there can be no question; but it is quite another matter whether I exactly know wherefore I now write, and *what* I may write. Thus much I am conscious of by a certain inward unrest: that I would gladly be by your side, and a scrap of paper is as true a consolation and as winged a steed for me here in noisy Strasburg as it can be to you in your quiet, if you truly feel the separation from your friend.

"The circumstances of our journey home you can easily imagine, if you marked my pain at parting, and how I longed to remain behind. Weyland's thoughts

[1] Schöll: "Briefe und Aufsätze," p. 51. The letters in Pfeiffer's book are manifest forgeries.

went forward, mine backward; so you can understand how our conversation was neither interesting nor copious.

"At the end of the Wanzenau we thought to shorten our route, and found ourselves in the midst of a morass. Night came on; and we only needed the storm which threatened to overtake us, to have had every reason for being fully convinced of the love and constancy of our princesses.[1]

"Meanwhile, the scroll which I held constantly in my hand — fearful of losing it — was a talisman which charmed away all the perils of the journey. And now? — oh I dare not utter it — either you can guess it, or you will not believe it!

"At last we arrived, and our first thought, which had been our joy on the road, was the project soon to see you again.

"How delicious a sensation is the hope of seeing again those we love! And we, when our coddled heart is a little sorrowful, at once bring it medicine and say: Dear little heart, be quiet, you will not long be away from her you love; be quiet, dear little heart! Meanwhile we give it a chimera to play with; and then is it good and still as a child to whom the mother gives a doll instead of the apple which it must not eat.

"Enough, we are *not* here, and so you see you were wrong. You would not believe that the noisy gaiety of Strasburg would be disagreeable to me after the sweet country pleasures enjoyed with you. Never, Mamsell, did Strasburg seem so empty to me as now. I hope, indeed, it will be better when the remembrance of those charming hours is a little dimmed — when I no longer feel so vividly how good, how amiable my friend is. Yet ought I to forget that, or

[1] An allusion doubtless intelligible to the person addressed, but I can make nothing of it.

to wish it? No; I will rather retain a little sorrow and write to you frequently.

"And now many, many thanks and many sincere remembrances to your dear parents. To your dear sister many hundred . . . what I would so willingly give you again!"

A few days after his return, Herder underwent the operation previously alluded to. Goethe was constantly with him; but as he carefully concealed all his mystical studies, fearing to have them ridiculed, so one may suppose he concealed also the new passion which deliciously tormented him. In silence he occupied himself with Frederika, and carefully sketched plans for the new parsonage. He sent her books, and received from her a letter, which of course seemed priceless.

In November he was again at Sesenheim. Night had already set in when he arrived; his impatience would not suffer him to wait till morning, the more so as the landlord assured him the young ladies had only just gone home, where "they expected some one." He felt jealous of this expected friend; and he hastened to the parsonage. Great was his surprise to find them *not* surprised; greater still to hear Frederika whisper, "Did I not say so? Here he is!" Her loving heart had prophesied his coming, and had named the very day.

The next day was Sunday, and many guests were expected. Early in the morning Frederika proposed a walk with him, leaving her mother and sister to look after domestic preparations. Who shall describe that walk, wherein the youthful pair abandoned themselves without concealment to all the delightful nothings of dawning love? They talked over the expected pleasures of the day, and arranged how to be always together. She taught him several games;

he taught her others; and underneath these innocent arrangements Love serenely smiled. The church bell called them from their walk. To church they went, and listened — not very attentively — to the worthy pastor. Another kind of devotion made their hearts devout. He meditated on her charming qualities, and as his glance rested on her ruddy lips, he recalled the last time woman's lips had been pressed to his own; recalled the curse which the excited French girl had uttered, a curse which hitherto had acted like a spell.

This superstition not a little troubled him in games of forfeits, where kisses always form a large proportion; and his presence of mind was often tried in the attempts to evade them; the more so as many of the guests, suspecting the tender relation between him and Frederika, sportively took every occasion to make them kiss. She, with natural instinct, aided him in his evasions. The time came, however, when, carried away by the excitement of the dance and games, he felt the burning pressure of her lips crush the superstition in a

> "Kiss, a long, long kiss
> Of youth and beauty gathered into one."

He returned to Strasburg, if not a formally betrothed, yet an accepted lover. As such the family and friends seem to have regarded him. Probably no betrothal took place, on account of his youth, and the necessity of obtaining his father's consent. His muse, lately silent, now found voice again, and several of the poems Frederika inspired are to be read in his published works.[1]

He had been sent to Strasburg to gain a doctor's degree. His Dissertation had been commenced just before this Sesenheim episode. But Shakespeare, Os-

[1] The whole have been reprinted in the "Sesenheimer Liederbuch;" and in Viehoff's "Goethe Erläutert."

sian, "Faust," "Götz," and, above all, Frederika, scattered his plans; and he followed the advice of friends to choose, instead of a Dissertation, a number of Theses, upon which to hold a disputation. His father would not hear of such a thing, but demanded a regular Dissertation. He chose, therefore, this theme, "*That it is the duty of every law-maker to establish a certain religious worship binding upon clergy and laity.*" A theme he supported by historical and philosophical arguments. The Dissertation was written in Latin, and sent to his father, who received it with pleasure. But the dean of the faculty would not receive it — either because its contents were paradoxical, or because it was not sufficiently erudite. In lieu thereof he was permitted to choose Theses for disputation. The disputation was held on the 6th of August, 1771, his opponent being Franz Lerse, who pressed him hard. A jovial *Schmaus*, a real student's banquet, crowned this promotion of Doctor Goethe.[1]

He could find no time for visits to Sesenheim during this active preparation for his doctorate; but he was not entirely separated from Frederika: her mother had come with both daughters to Strasburg, on a visit to a rich relative. He had been for some time acquainted with this family, and had many opportunities of meeting his beloved. The girls, who came in their Alsatian costume, found their cousins and friends dressed like Frenchwomen; a contrast which greatly vexed Olivia, who felt "like a maidservant" among these fashionable friends. Her restless manners evidently made Goethe somewhat ashamed of her. Frederika, on the other hand, though equally out of her element in this society, was more self-possessed, and perfectly contented so long

[1] There is some obscurity on this point. From a letter to Salzmann, it seems he only got a licentiate degree at this time. The doctorate he certainly had; but *when* his diploma was prepared is not known.

as he was by her side. There is in the Autobiography a significant phrase: this visit of the family is called a "peculiar test of his love." And test it was, as every one must see who considers the relations in which the lovers stood. He was the son of an important Frankfort citizen, and held almost the position of a nobleman in relation to the poor pastor's daughter. Indeed, the social disparity was so great, that many explain his not marrying Frederika on the ground of such a match being impossible, — "his father," it is said, "would not have listened to such a thing for a moment." Love in no wise troubles itself about station, never asks "what will the world say?" but there is quite a different solicitude felt by Love when approaching Marriage. In the first eagerness of passion, a prince may blindly pursue a peasant; but when his love is gratified by return, when reflection reasserts its duties, then the prince will consider what in other minds will be the estimation of his mistress. Men are very sensitive to the opinions of others on their mistresses and wives; and Goethe's love must indeed have been put to the test, at seeing Frederika and her sister thus in glaring contrast with the society in which he moved. In the groves of Sesenheim she was a wood-nymph; but in Strasburg salons the wood-nymph seemed a peasant. Who is there that has not experienced a similar destruction of illusion, in seeing an admired person lose almost all charm in the change of environment?

Frederika laid her sweet commands on him one evening, and bade him entertain the company by reading "Hamlet" aloud. He did so, to the great enjoyment of all, especially Frederika, "who from time to time sighed deeply, and a passing colour tinged her cheeks." Was she thinking of poor Ophelia — placing herself in that forlorn position?

> "For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
> Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood!"

She may have had some presentiment of her fate. The applause, however, which her lover gained was proudly accepted by her, "and in her graceful manner she did not deny herself the little pride of having shone through him."

It is quite certain that his mind was disturbed by vague uneasiness. "How happy is he," he writes, "whose heart is light and free! Courage urges us to confront difficulties and dangers, and only by great labour are great joys obtained. That, perhaps, is the worst I have to allege against Love. They say it gives courage: never! The heart that loves is weak. When it beats wildly in the bosom, and tears fill our eyes, and we sit in an inconceivable rapture as they flow — then, oh! then, we are so weak, that flower-chains bind us, not because they have the strength of any magic, but because we tremble lest we break them."

The mention of "Hamlet" leads us naturally into the society where he sought oblivion, when Frederika quitted Strasburg. Her departure, he confesses, was a *relief* to him. She herself felt, on leaving, that the end of their romance was approaching. He plunged into gaiety to drown tormenting thoughts. "If you could but see me," he wrote to Salzmann, after describing a dance which had made him forget his fever: "my whole being was sunk in dancing. And yet could I but say: I am happy; that would be better than all. 'Who is't can say I am at the worst?' says Edgar (in 'Lear'). That is some comfort, dear friend. My heart is like a weathercock when a storm is rising, and the gusts are changeable." Some days later he wrote: "All is not clear in my soul. I am too curiously awake not to feel that I grasp at shadows. And yet. . . . To-morrow at seven my horse is saddled, and then adieu!"

Besides striving to drown in gaiety these tormenting thoughts, he also strove to divert them into channels

of nobler activity; stimulated thereto by the Shakespearian fanaticism of his new friend Lenz.

Reinhold Lenz, irrevocably forgotten as a poet, whom a vain effort on the part of Gruppe has tried to bring once more into public favour,[1] is not without interest to the student of German literature during the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) period. He came to Strasburg in 1770, accompanying two young noblemen as their tutor, and mingling with them in the best society of the place; and by means of Salzmann was introduced to the club. Although he had begun by translating Pope's "Essay on Criticism," he was, in the strictest sense of the word, one of the Shakespeare bigots, who held to the severest orthodoxy in Shakespeare as a first article of their creed, and who not only maintained the Shakespeare clowns to be incomparable, but strove to imitate them in their language. It is not easy for us to imagine the effect which the revelation of such a mind as Shakespeare's must have produced on the young Germans. His strength, profundity of thought, originality and audacity of language, his beauty, pathos, sublimity, wit, and wild overflowing humour, and his accuracy of observation as well as depth of insight into the mysteries of passion and character, were qualities which no false criticism, and, above all, no national taste prevented Germans from appreciating. It was very different in France. There an established form of art, with which national pride was identified, and an established set of critical rules, upon which Taste securely rested, necessarily made Shakespeare appear like a Cyclops of Genius — a monster, though of superhuman proportions. Frenchmen could not help being shocked at many things in Shakespeare; yet even those who were most outraged, were also most amazed at the pearls to be found upon the dunghill. In Germany the pearls alone were seen.

[1] Gruppe: "Reinhold Lenz, Leben und Werke," 1861.

French taste had been pitilessly ridiculed by Lessing. The French Tragedy had been contrasted with Shakespeare, and pronounced unworthy of comparison. To the Germans, therefore, Shakespeare was a standard borne by all who combated against France, and his greatness was proclaimed with something of wilful preference. The state of German literature also rendered his influence the more powerful. Had Shakespeare been first revealed to *us* when Mr. Hayley was the great laureate of the age, we should have felt something of the eagerness with which the young and ardent minds of Germany received this greatest poet of all ages.

I am fortunately enabled, thanks to Otto Jahn, to give here a very interesting illustration of the enthusiasm with which these young men studied Shakespeare; and among the new materials this Biography contains, perhaps nothing will be so welcome in England. It is an oration prepared by Goethe for one of the meetings of the Shakespeare circle before mentioned. To hear the youth of one and twenty thus eloquent on his great idol, lets us intimately into the secret of his mental condition.

ORATION ON SHAKESPEARE.

"In my opinion, the noblest of our sentiments is the hope of continuing to live, even when destiny seems to have carried us back into the common lot of non-existence. This life, gentlemen, is much too short for our souls; the proof is, that every man, the lowest as well as the highest, the most incapable as well as the most meritorious, will be tired of anything sooner than of life, and that no one reaches the goal toward which he sets out; for however long a man may be prosperous in his career, still at last, and often when in sight of the hoped-for object, he falls into a grave, which God

knows who dug for him, and is reckoned as nothing. Reckoned as nothing? I? who am everything to myself, since I know things only through myself! So cries every one who is truly conscious of himself; and makes great strides through this life — a preparation for the unending course above. Each, it is true, according to his measure. If one sets out with the sturdiest walking pace, the other wears seven-leagued boots and outstrips him? two steps of the latter are equal to a day's journey of the former. Be it as it may with him of the seven-leagued boots, this diligent traveller remains our friend and our companion, while we are amazed at the gigantic steps of the other and admire him, follow his footsteps and measure them with our own.

"Let us up and be going, gentlemen! To watch a solitary march like this enlarges and animates our souls more than to stare at the thousand footsteps of a royal procession. To-day we honour the memory of the greatest traveller on this journey of life, and thereby we are doing an honour to ourselves. When we know how to appreciate a merit, we have the germ of it within ourselves. Do not expect that I should say much or methodically; mental calmness is no garment for a festival; and as yet I have thought little upon Shakespeare; to have glimpses, and, in exalted passages, to feel, is the utmost I have been able to obtain. The first page of his that I read made me his for life; and when I had finished a single play, I stood like one born blind, on whom a miraculous hand bestows sight in a moment. I saw, I felt, in the most vivid manner, that my existence was infinitely expanded, everything was now unknown to me, and the unwonted light pained my eyes. By little and little I learned to see, and, thanks to my receptive genius, I continue vividly to feel what I have won. I did not hesitate for a moment about renouncing the classical

drama. The unity of place seemed to me irksome as a prison, the unities of action and of time burthensome fetters to our imagination; I sprang into the open air, and felt for the first time that I had hands and feet. And now that I see how much injury the men of rule did me in their dungeon, and how many free souls still crouch there, my heart would burst if I did not declare war against them, and did not seek daily to batter down their towers.

"The Greek drama, which the French took as their model, was both in its inward and outward character such, that it would be easier for a marquis to imitate Alcibiades than for Corneille to follow Sophocles. At first an *intermezzo* of divine worship, then a mode of political celebration, the tragedy presented to the people great isolated actions of their fathers with the pure simplicity of perfection; it stirred thorough and great emotions in souls because it was itself thorough and great. And in what souls? Greek souls! I cannot explain to myself what that expresses, but I feel it, and appeal for the sake of brevity to Homer and Sophocles, and Theocritus; they have taught me to feel it.

"Now hereupon I immediately ask: Frenchman, what wilt thou do with the Greek armour? it is too strong and too heavy for thee.

"Hence, also, French tragedies are parodies of themselves. How regularly everything goes forward, and how they are as like each other as shoes, and tiresome withal, especially in the fourth act — all this, gentlemen, you know from experience, and I say nothing about it.

"Who it was that first thought of bringing great political actions on the stage, I know not; this is a subject which affords an opportunity to the amateur for a critical treatise. I doubt whether the honour of the invention belongs to Shakespeare; it is enough

that he brought this species of drama to the pitch which still remains the highest, for few eyes can reach it, and thus it is scarcely to be hoped that any one will see beyond it or ascend above it. Shakespeare, my friend! if thou wert yet amongst us, I could live nowhere but with thee; how gladly would I play the subordinate character of a Pylades, if thou wert Orestes; yes, rather than be a venerated high priest in the temple of Delphos.

"I will break off, gentlemen, and write more to-morrow, for I am in a strain which, perhaps, is not so edifying to you as it is heartfelt by me.

"Shakespeare's dramas are a beautiful casket of rarities, in which the history of the world passes before our eyes on the invisible thread of time. His plots, to speak according to the ordinary style, are no plots, for his plays all turn upon the hidden point (which no philosopher has yet seen and defined), in which the peculiarity of our *ego*, the pretended freedom of our will, clashes with the necessary course of the *whole*. But our corrupt taste so beclouds our eyes, that we almost need a new creation to extricate us from this darkness.

"All French writers, and Germans infected with French taste, even Wieland, have in this matter, as in several others, done themselves little credit. Voltaire, who from the first made a profession of vilifying everything majestic, has here also shown himself a genuine Thersites. If I were Ulysses, his back should writhe under my sceptre. Most of these critics object especially to Shakespeare's characters. And I cry, nature, nature! nothing so natural as Shakespeare's men.

"There I have them all by the neck. Give me air that I may speak! He rivalled Prometheus, and formed his men feature by feature, only of *colossal size;* therein lies the reason that we do not recognise our brethren; and then he animated them with the breath of *his*

mind; *he* speaks in all of them, and we perceive their relationship.

"And how shall our age form a judgment as to what is natural? Whence can we be supposed to know nature, we who, from youth upward, feel everything within us, and see everything in others, laced up and decorated? I am often ashamed before Shakespeare, for it often happens that at the first glance I think to myself I should have done that differently; but soon I perceive that I am a poor sinner, that nature prophesies through Shakespeare, and that my men are soap-bubbles blown from romantic fancies.

"And now to conclude, — though I have not yet begun. What noble philosophers have said of the world, applies also to Shakespeare; — namely, that what we call evil is only the other side, and belongs as necessarily to its existence and to the Whole, as the torrid zone must burn and Lapland freeze, in order that there may be a temperate region. He leads us through the whole world, but we, enervated, inexperienced men, cry at every strange grasshopper that meets us: He will devour us.

"Up, gentlemen! sound the alarm to all noble souls who are in the elysium of so-called good taste, where drowsy in tedious twilight they are half alive, half not alive, with passions in their hearts and no marrow in their bones; and because they are not tired enough to sleep, and yet are too idle to be active, loiter and yawn away their shadowy life between myrtle and laurel bushes."

In these accents we hear the voice of the youth who wrote "Götz with the Iron Hand." If the reader turn to the Autobiography and see there what is said of Shakespeare, he will be able to appreciate what I meant in saying that the *tone* of the Autobiography is unlike the reality. The tone of this speech is that of

the famous *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) period, which in after life became so very objectionable to him. How differently Schiller was affected by Shakespeare may be read in the following confession: "When at an early age I first grew acquainted with this poet, I was indignant at his coldness — indignant with the insensibility which allowed him to jest and sport amidst the highest pathos. Led by my knowledge of more modern poets to seek the poet in his works; to meet and sympathise with his heart; to reflect with him over his object; it was insufferable to me that this poet gave me nothing of himself. Many years had he my reverence — certainly my earnest study, before I could comprehend his individuality. I was not yet fit to comprehend nature at first hand."

The enthusiasm for Shakespeare naturally excited Goethe to dramatic composition, and, besides "Götz" and "Faust," before mentioned, we find in his Note-book the commencement of a drama on "Julius Cæsar."

Three forms rise up from out the many influences of Strasburg into distinct and memorable importance: Frederika; Herder; the Cathedral. An exquisite woman, a noble thinker, and a splendid monument, led him into the regions of Passion, Poetry, and Art. The influence of the Cathedral was great enough to make him write the little tractate on German architecture, "D. M. Erwini à Steinbach," with an enthusiasm so incomprehensible to him in after years, that he was with difficulty persuaded to reprint the tractate among his works. Do we not see here — as in so many other traits — how different the youth is from the child or man?

How thoroughly he had entered into the spirit of Gothic architecture is indicated by the following anecdote. In company with some friends he was admiring the Strasburg Cathedral, when one remarked, "What a

pity it was not finished, and that there should be only one steeple!" Upon this he answered, "It is a matter of equal regret to me to see this solitary steeple unfinished; the four spiral staircases leave off too abruptly at the top; they ought to have been surmounted by four light pinnacles, with a higher one rising in the centre instead of the clumsy mass." Some one, turning round to him, asked him who told him *that?* "The tower itself," he answered; "I have studied it so long, so attentively, and with so much love, that it has at last confessed to me its open secret." Whereupon his questioner informed him that the tower had spoken truly, and offered to show him the original sketches, which still existed among the archives.

Inasmuch as in England many professed admirers of architecture appear imperfectly acquainted with the history of the revival of the taste for Gothic art, it may not be superfluous to call attention to the fact that Goethe was among the very first to recognise the peculiar beauty of that style, at a period when classical, or pseudo-classical, taste was everywhere dominant. It appears that he was in friendly correspondence with Sulpiz Boisserée, the artist who made the restored design of the Cologne Cathedral; from whom he doubtless learned much. And we see by the "Wahlverwandtschaften" that he had a portfolio of designs illustrative of the principle of the pointed style. This was in 1809, when scarcely any one thought of the Gothic; long before Victor Hugo had written his "Notre Dame de Paris;" long before Pugin and Ruskin had thrown their impassioned energy into this revival; at a time when the Church in Langham Place was thought beautiful, and the Temple Church an eyesore.

And now he was to leave Strasburg, — to leave Frederika. Much as her presence had troubled him of late, in her absence he only thought of her fascinations. He had not ceased to love her, though he

already felt she never would be his. He went to say adieu. "Those were painful days, of which I remember nothing. When I held out my hand to her from my horse, the tears were in her eyes, and I felt sad at heart. As I rode along the footpath to Drusenheim a strange phantasy took hold of me. I saw in my mind's eye my own figure riding toward me, attired in a dress I had never worn — pike gray with gold lace. I shook off this phantasy, but eight years afterward I found myself on the very road, going to visit Frederika, and that too in the very dress which I had seen myself in, in this phantasm, although my wearing it was quite accidental." The reader will probably be somewhat skeptical respecting the dress, and will suppose that this prophetic detail was afterward transferred to the vision by the imagination of later years.[1]

And so farewell, Frederika, bright and exquisite vision of a poet's youth! We love you, pity you, and think how differently *we* should have treated you! We make pilgrimages to Sesenheim as to Vaucluse, and write legibly our names in the Visitors' Album, to testify so much. And we read, not without emotion, narratives such as that of the worthy philologist Näke, who in 1822 made the first pilgrimage,[2] thinking, as he went, of this enchanting Frederika (and somewhat also of a private Frederika of his own), examined every rood of the ground, dined meditatively at the inn (with a passing reflection that the bill was larger than he anticipated), took coffee with the pastor's successor; and, with a sentiment touching in a philologist, bore away a sprig of the jessamine which in days gone by had been tended by the white hands of Frederika, and placed it in his pocketbook as an imperishable souvenir.

[1] The correspondence with the Frau von Stein contains a letter written by him a day or two after this visit, but, singularly enough, *no* mention of this coincidence.

[2] "Die Wallfahrt nach Sesenheim."

Book the Third

1771 to 1775

" Es bildet ein Talent, sich in der Stille,
Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."

" Trunken müssen wir alle seyn:
Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein."

" They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad." — *Shakespeare.*

CHAPTER I.

DOCTOR GOETHE'S RETURN.

ON the 25th or 28th of August, 1771, he quitted Strasburg. His way led through Mannheim; and there he was first thrilled by the beauty of ancient masterpieces, some of which he saw in plaster cast. Whatever might be his predilection for Gothic art, he could not view these casts without feeling himself in presence of an Art in its way also divine; and his previous study of Lessing lent a peculiar interest to the Laocoön group, now before his eyes.

Passing on to Mainz, he fell in with a young wandering harpist, and invited the ragged minstrel to Frankfort, promising him a public in the Fair, and a lodging in his father's house. It was lucky that he thought of acquainting his mother with this invitation. Alarmed at its imprudence, she secured a lodging in the town, and so the boy wanted neither shelter nor patronage.

Rath Goethe was not a little proud of the young Doctor. He was also not a little disturbed by the young doctor's manners; and often shook his ancient respectable head at the opinions which exploded like bombshells in the midst of society. Doctoral gravity was but slightly attended to by this young hero of the *Sturm und Drang*. The revolutionary movement known by the title of the "Storm and Stress" was then about to astonish Germany, and to startle all conventions, by works such as Gerstenberg's "Ugo-

lino," Goethe's "Götz von Berlichingen," and Klinger's "Sturm und Drang" (whence the name). The wisdom and extravagance of that age united in one stream: the masterly criticisms of Lessing, — the enthusiasm for Shakespeare, — the mania for Ossian and the northern mythology, — the revival of ballad literature, — and imitations of Rousseau, all worked in one rebellious current against established Authority. There was one universal shout for Nature. With the young, Nature seemed to be a compound of volcanoes and moonlight; her force, explosion, her beauty, sentiment. To be insurgent and sentimental, explosive and lachrymose, were the true signs of genius. Everything established was humdrum. Genius, abhorrent of humdrum, would neither spell correctly, nor write correctly, nor demean itself correctly. It would be *German* — lawless, rude, and natural. Lawless it was, and rude it was, but not natural, according to Nature of any reputable type.

It is not easy, in the pages of the Autobiography, to detect in Goethe an early leader of the *Sturm und Drang;*" but it is easy enough to detect this in other sources. Here is a glimpse, in a letter from Mayer of Lindau (one of the Strasburg set) to Salzmann, worth chapters of the Autobiography on such a point. "*O Corydon, Corydon, quæ te dementia cepit!* According to the chain in which our ideas are linked together, *Corydon* and *dementia* put me in mind of the extravagant Goethe. He is still at Frankfort, is he not?"

That such a youth, whose wildness made friends nickname him the "bear" and the "wolf," could have been wholly pleasing to his steady, formal father, is not to be expected. Yet the worthy sire was not a little proud of his son's attainments. The verses, essays, notes, and drawings which had accumulated during the residence in Strasburg were very gratifying to him. He began to arrange them with scrupulous

neatness, hoping to see them shortly published. But the poet had a virtue, perhaps of all virtues the rarest in youthful writers, — a reluctance to appear in print. Seeing, as we daily see, the feverish alacrity with which men accede to that extremely imaginary request, "request of friends," and dauntlessly rush into print, — seeing the obstinacy with which they cling to all they have written, and insist on what they have written being printed, — Goethe's reluctance demands an explanation. And if I may interpret according to my own experience, the explanation is that his delight in composition was rather the pure delight of intellectual activity, than a delight in the result: delight, not in the *work*, but in the *working*. Thus no sooner had he finished a poem than his interest in it began to fade; and he passed on to another. Hence it was that he left so many works fragments, his interest having been exhausted before each whole was completed.

He had a small circle of literary friends to whom he communicated his productions, and this was publication enough for him. We shall see him hereafter in Weimar, writing solely for a circle of friends and troubling himself scarcely at all about a public. It was necessary for him to occupy himself with some work which should absorb him as "Götz" did at this time, for only in work could he forget the pain, almost remorse, which followed his renunciation of Frederika. If at Strasburg he had felt that an end was approaching to this sweet romance, at Frankfort, among family connections, and with new prospects widening before him, he felt it still more. He wrote to her. Unhappily that letter is not preserved. It would have made clear much that is now conjectural. "Frederika's answer," he says, "to the letter in which I had bidden her adieu, tore my heart. I now, for the first time, became aware of her bereavement, and saw no possi-

bility of alleviating it. She was ever in my thoughts; I felt that she was wanting to me; and, worst of all, I could not forgive myself! Gretchen had been taken from me; Annchen had left me; but now, for the first time, I was guilty; I had wounded, to its very depths, one of the most beautiful and tender of hearts. And that period of gloomy repentance, bereft of the love which had so invigorated me, was agonising, insupportable. But man will live; and hence I took a sincere interest in others, seeking to disentangle their embarrassments, and to unite those about to part, that they might not feel what I felt. Hence I got the name of the 'Confidant,' and also, on account of my wanderings, I was named the 'Wanderer.' Under the broad open sky, on the heights or in the valleys, in the fields and through the woods, my mind regained some of its calmness. I almost lived on the road, wandering between the mountains and the plains. Often I went, alone or in company, right through my native city, as though I were a stranger in it, dining at one of the great inns in the High Street, and after dinner pursuing my way. I turned more than ever to the open world and to Nature; there alone I found comfort. During my walks I sang to myself strange hymns and dithyrambs. One of these, the 'Wanderer's Sturmlied,' still remains. I remember singing it aloud in an impassioned style amid a terrific storm. The burden of this rhapsody is that a man of genius must walk resolutely through the storms of life, relying solely on himself;" a burden which seems to give expression to what he then felt respecting his relation to Frederika.

Although we have no exact knowledge of the circumstances from the height of which to judge his conduct, the question must be put, Why did he not marry Frederika? It is a question often raised, and as often sophistically answered. By one party he is angrily condemned; disingenuously absolved by another.

But he himself acknowledged his fault. He himself never put forth any excuse. He does not hint at disparity of station, he does not say there were objections from his parents. He makes *no* excuse, but confesses the wrong, and blames himself without sophistication. Yet the excuses he would not suggest, partisans have been eager to suggest for him. Some have sought far and wide in the gutters of scandal for materials of defence. One gets up a story about Frederika being seduced by a Catholic priest; whence it is argued that Goethe could not be expected to marry one so frail; whence also it follows, by way of counterblast, that it was *his* desertion which caused her fall.[1] The basis of fact on which this lie is reared (there is usually some basis, even for the wildest lies) is that Frederika brought up the orphan child of her sister Salome.

Let me endeavour, without sophistication, to state the real case, at least as far as the imperfect evidence admits of a judgment. It seems always to have been forgotten by the many writers who have discussed this topic, that our judgment is misled by the artistic charm which Goethe has thrown over the narrative: we fail to separate the Fact from the Fiction: we read the poem he has made out of his early experience, and read it as if the poem were an unvarnished record of that experience. He has painted Frederika so charmingly; he has told the story of their simple youthful love with so much grace, and quiet emotion; he has captivated us so entirely by the Idyl, that our feelings are rudely disturbed when we find the Idyl is not to end in a marriage.

But if we consider the case calmly, divesting it as much as possible of illusive suggestions, we may, perhaps, come to the conclusion that it was after all only

[1] Strangely enough, although Goethe read the MS. in which Näke repeats this story, he takes no notice of it.

a "love-affair" between a boy and a girl, a temporary fascination, such as often stirs the affections of youth without deepening into serious thought of marriage. Doubtless the reader can from his or her own history rapidly recall such an experience; certainly the experience of their friends will supply such cases. If we read the story in this light all is clear. The boy and girl are fascinated by each other; they look into each other's eyes, and are happy; they walk together, talk together, and, when separated, think of each other. But they never think of marriage; or think of it vaguely as a remote contingency. Young love's dream is enough for them. They are pained at parting; perhaps all the more so, because they dimly feel that the awakening is at hand. But there is a sort of tacit understanding that marriage is not the issue to be looked for. Had any one hinted to either Goethe or Frederika that their passion was but a "youthful stirring of the blood," and not an eternal union of souls, they would assuredly have resented it with emphatic denial. Yet so it was. Goethe soon consoled himself; and there is positive evidence that Frederika, shortly afterward, allowed herself to be consoled by Lenz.

Such, after mature deliberation, I believe to have been the real story. When Goethe, reviewing in old age the pleasant dreams of youth, and weaving them into an artistic narrative, avowedly half fiction, came to that episode with Frederika, he thought of it as we all think of our early loves, with a mingled tenderness and pain; his imagination was kindled, and he turned his experience into an Idyl. But the fact thus idealised was a very ordinary fact; the story thus poetised was a very common story, and could be told by ninety out of every hundred students, who do *not* marry the idol of the last university term. That Goethe, with his affectionate sensitive nature, was for a time in love with Frederika, is certain. It is also certain that,

whatever the agitation of his feelings, they were not *deeply* moved: she had laid no firm hold of his soul: there were none of those ties between them which grow stronger with advancing time.

No sooner had he made this decisively clear to himself, than he wrote to Frederika to tell her so. No woman can be given up without feeling pain, and probably Frederika's affections were far more deeply engaged than his were; nevertheless, in spite of the pain she doubtless felt, and pathetically expressed in her letter to him, we find her presently engaged in another "love-affair," with the poet Lenz, which, though it ended in a breach, certainly went so far as the exchange of vows; and, according to Lenz, the growth of the passion was rapid. "It was with us both," he writes to his friend, "as with Cæsar: *veni, vidi, vici.* Through unconscious causes grew our confidence — and now it is sworn, and indissoluble." When, in after years, Goethe visited Frederika, she — having long given up Lenz, whose madness must have made her rejoice in her escape — told him of Lenz having pretended to be in love with her, but omitted to say anything about her own reciprocity; and she omitted this from motives which every woman will appreciate. But however obscure the story may be, it seems certain that at least for a short time she believed in and to some extent returned Lenz's passion.[1]

After this exposition of what I conceive to be the real case, it will be easy to answer the outcry of the sentimentalists against Goethe's "faithlessness" and his "cruel treatment of Frederika," without recurring to the excuses sometimes put forth, that to have been faithful to her he must have been faithless to his genius, or that it was better one woman's heart should be broken (which it was *not*) than that the poet's ex-

[1] For full details see Gruppe: "Reinhold Lenz, Leben und Werke," 1861, pp. 11, *sq.*

perience should be narrowed within the small circle of domestic life. It is a mistake to speak of faithlessness at all. We may regret that he did not feel the serious affection which would have claimed her as a wife; we may upbraid him for the thoughtlessness with which he encouraged the sentimental relation: but he was perfectly right to draw back from an engagement which he felt his love was not strong enough properly to fulfil. It seems to me that he acted a more moral part in relinquishing her, than if he had swamped this lesser in a greater wrong, and escaped one breach of faith by a still greater breach of faith — a reluctant, because unloving, marriage. The thoughtlessness of youth and the headlong impetus of passion frequently throw people into rash engagements; and in these cases the *formal* morality of the world, more careful of externals than of the soul, declares it to be nobler for such rash engagements to be kept, even when the rashness is felt by the engaged, than that a man's honour should be stained by a withdrawal. The letter thus takes precedence of the spirit. To satisfy this prejudice a life is sacrificed. A miserable marriage rescues the honour; and no one throws the burden of that misery upon the prejudice. I am not forgetting the necessity of being stringent against the common thoughtlessness of youth in forming such relations; but I say that this thoughtlessness once having occurred, reprobate it as we may, the pain which a separation may bring had better be endured, than evaded by an unholy marriage, which cannot come to good.

Frederika herself must have felt so, too, for never did a word of blame escape her; and we shall see how affectionately she welcomed him, when they met after the lapse of years. This, however, does not absolve him from the blame of having thoughtlessly incurred the responsibility of her affection. That blame he

must bear. The reader will apportion it according as he estimates the excuses of temperament, and the common thoughtlessness of men in such matters.

Although I think Goethe's conduct in this matter perfectly upright, and justifiable from a far more serious point of view than that of being faithful to his genius, I am not at all disposed to acquiesce in the assumption that marriage with Frederika would have crippled his genius by narrowing his sympathies. The cause of his relinquishing her was the want of a sufficiently powerful love; and that also is his justification. Had he loved her enough to share a life with her, his experience of woman might have been less extensive, but it would assuredly have gained an element it wanted. It would have been deepened. He had experienced, and he could paint (no one better), the exquisite devotion of woman to man; but he had scarcely ever felt the peculiar tenderness of man for woman, when that tenderness takes the form of vigilant protecting fondness. He knew little, and that not until late in life, of the subtle interweaving of habit with affection, which makes life saturated with love, and love itself become dignified through the serious aims of life. He knew little of the exquisite *companionship* of two souls striving in emulous spirit of loving rivalry to become better, to become wiser, teaching each other to soar. He knew little of this; and the kiss he feared to press upon the loving lips of Frederika — the life of sympathy he refused to share with her — are wanting to the fulness of his art.

In such a mood as that which followed the rupture with Frederika, it is not wonderful if Frankfort and the practice of law were odious to him. Nothing but hard work could do him good: and he worked hard. From the Herder Correspondence it appears that he read Greek writers with some eagerness, his letters

being studded with citations from Plato, Homer, and Pindar. *Die Griechen sind mein einziges Studium* (I study nothing but the Greeks), he says. We find him also working at "Götz von Berlichingen." Gothic Art, a kindred subject, occupies him, and from thence, by an easy transition, he passes to the Bible, to study it anew. The results of this study are seen in two little tractates published in 1773, one called "Brief des Pastors zu —— an den neuen Pastor zu ——;" the other, "Zwei wichtige bisher unerörtete biblische Fragen, zum ersten Mal grundlich beantwortet von einem Landgeistlichen in Schwaben." The influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg is traceable in the religious tone of these works; while his own affectionate nature speaks in the tolerance preached. Of the two Biblical questions, one goes to prove that it was not the ten commandments which stood on the tables of Moses, but ten laws of the Israelitish-Jehovah covenant. The second is an answer, by no means clear, to the question: "What is it to speak with tongues?" which he explains as a "speech of the Spirit, more than pantomime, and yet inarticulate."

Among the friends to whom he communicated his plans and ideas, two must be named: Schlosser, whom we have seen at Leipsic, and Merck, whose influence was very beneficial. The portrait sketched of this remarkable man in the Autobiography gives a very incorrect idea to those who cannot control what is there said by other direct evidence; especially calculated to mislead is the nickname "Mephistopheles Merck:" for whatever tendency to sarcasm Merck may have indulged in, it is quite clear that his admiration was generous and warm, his influence over Goethe being uniformly one of friendly incitement, or of friendly warning.

Johann Heinrich Merck was born in Darmstadt, 1741. The son of an apothecary, he raised himself to

the companionship of princes. He was at this time *Kriegsrath* in Darmstadt, and in correspondence with most of the notabilities of the day; among them Herder, who had the highest opinion of his abilities, and the most jealous anxiety to retain his friendship, fearing lest the new friendship with Goethe should step between them; as, indeed, eventually it did. Merck, whose significance in the history of German literature is considerable, and whose correspondence shows him to have critically influenced men greatly his superiors in production, was one of the most zealous propagators of English literature. He began by translating Hutcheson "On Beauty," Addison's "Cato," and Shaw's "Travels in the Levant." The Shakespeare neophytes found him prepared to share their enthusiasm; and when, in 1772, he persuaded Schlosser to undertake the editing of the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*, and to make it the Moniteur of the *Sturm und Drang* party, his own contributions were numerous and valuable.[1] His official duties do not seem to have pressed very heavily upon him, for he made frequent excursions, and seems to have stayed some time at Frankfort. The friendship between him and Goethe was warm. He saw more deeply than Herder into this singular genius, and on many critical occasions we find him always manifesting a clear insight and a real regard.

The *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen* was a point of reunion, bringing Goethe into relation with many persons of ability. It also afforded him an opportunity of exercising himself in criticism. Thirty-five of the articles he wrote for this journal have been collected into his works, where the curious student will seek them. In these studies the time flew swiftly. He had recommenced horse and sword exercise, and Klop-

[1] See for further information the work of Stahr: "Johann Heinrich Merck: Ein Denkmal."

stock having made skating illustrious, it soon became an amusement of which he was never tired; all day long, and deep into the night, he was to be seen wheeling along; and as the full moon rose above the clouds over the wide nocturnal fields of ice, and the night wind rushed at his face, and the echo of his movements came with ghostly sound upon his ear, he seemed to be in Ossian's world. Indoors there were studies and music. "Will you ask my violoncello master," he writes to Salzmann, "if he still has the sonatas for two basses, which I played with him, and if so, send them to me as quickly as convenient? I practise this art somewhat more earnestly than before. As to my other occupations, you will have gathered from my drama ('Götz'), that the purposes of my soul are becoming more earnest."

It has before been hinted that *Sturm und Drang*, as it manifested itself in the mind and bearing of the young doctor, was but very moderately agreeable to the old Rath Goethe; and whatever sympathy we may feel with the poet, yet, as we are all parents, or hope to be, let us not permit our sympathy to become injustice; let us admit that the old Rath had considerable cause for parental uneasiness, and let us follow the son to Wetzlar without flinging any hard words at his father.

CHAPTER II.

GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN.

ALTHOUGH "Götz" was not published until the summer of 1773, it was written in the winter of 1771, or, to speak more accurately, the first of the three versions into which the work was shaped was written at this time. We must bear in mind that there are three versions; the first is entitled the "Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen mit der eisernen Hand, dramatisirt,"[1] which was not published until very many years afterward. The second is entitled "Götz von Berlichingen, Schauspiel,"[2] and is the form in which the work was *originally* published. The third is an adaptation of this second piece, with a view to stage representation, which adaptation was made with Schiller during the first efforts to create a national stage at Weimar."[3]

The first form is the one I most admire, and the one which, biographically, has most interest. While he is on his way to Wetzlar we will open his portfolio, and take out this manuscript for closer scrutiny, instead of waiting till he publishes the second version. From a letter to Salzmann we learn that it was written in November, 1771. "My whole genius is given to an undertaking which makes me forget Shakespeare, Homer, everything; I am dramatising the history of

[1] "Werke," vol. xxxiv., of the edition of 1840.
[2] "Werke," vol. ix.
[3] "Werke," vol. xxxv.

the noblest of Germans, to rescue the memory of a brave man; and the labour it costs me kills time here, which is at present so necessary for me." He gives the following account of its composition, in the Autobiography: "An unceasing interest in Shakespeare's works had so expanded my mind, that the narrow compass of the stage, and the short time allotted to a representation, seemed to me insufficient for the development of an important idea. The life of 'Götz von Berlichingen,' written by himself, suggested the historic mode of treatment; and my imagination took so wide a sweep, that my dramatic construction also went beyond all theatrical limits in seeking more and more to approach life. I had, as I proceeded, talked the matter over with my sister, who was interested heart and soul in such subjects; and I so often renewed this conversation, without taking any steps toward beginning the work, that at last she impatiently and urgently entreated me not to be always talking, but, once for all, to set down upon paper that which must be so distinct before my mind. Moved by this impulse, I began one morning to write without having made any previous sketch or plan. I wrote the first scenes, and in the evening they were read aloud to Cornelia. She greatly applauded them, but doubted whether I should go on so; nay, she even expressed a decided unbelief in my perseverance. This only incited me the more; I wrote on the next day, and also on the third. Hope increased with the daily communications, and step by step everything gained more life as I mastered the conception. Thus I kept on, without interruption, looking neither backwards nor forwards, neither to the right nor to the left; and in about six weeks I had the pleasure of seeing the manuscript stitched."

Gottfried von Berlichingen, surnamed of the Iron Hand, was a distinguished predatory burgrave of the

sixteenth century;[1] one of the last remains of a turbulent, lawless race of feudal barons, whose personal prowess often lent the lustre of romance to acts of brigandage. Gottfried with the Iron Hand was a worthy type of the class. His loyalty was as unshakable as his courage. Whatever his revered emperor thought fit to do, he thought right to be done. Below the emperor he acknowledged no lord. With his fellow barons he waged continual war. Against the Bishop of Bamberg, especially, he was frequently in arms; no sooner was a peace arranged with him, than the Bishop of Mainz was attacked. War was his element. With something of Robin Hood chivalry, he was found on the side of the weak and persecuted; unless when the Kaiser called for his arm, or unless when tempted by a little private pillage on his own account. To his strong arm the persecuted looked for protection. A tailor earns two hundred florins by shooting at a mark; the sum is withheld; he goes to Götz with a piteous tale; instantly the Iron Hand clutches the recalcitrant debtors travelling that way, and makes them pay the two hundred florins.

It was a tempting subject for a poet of the eighteenth century, this bold, chivalrous robber, struggling single-handed against the advancing power of civilisation, this lawless chieftain making a hopeless stand against the Law, and striving to perpetuate the feudal spirit. Peculiarly interesting to the poet was the consecration of *individual* greatness in Götz. Here was a man great not by privilege, but by Nature; his superiority given him by no tradition, by no court favour, but by favour only of his own strong arm and indomitable spirit. And was not the struggle of the whole eighteenth century a struggle for the recognition

[1] Scott by an oversight makes him flourish in the fifteenth century. He was born in 1482, and thus reached man's estate with the opening of the sixteenth century.

of individual worth, of Rights against Privileges, of Liberty against Tradition? Such also was the struggle of the sixteenth century. The Reformation was to Religion what the Revolution was to Politics: a stand against the tyranny of Tradition — a battle for the rights of *individual* liberty of thought and action, against the absolute prescriptions of privileged classes.

In the "Chronicle of Götz von Berlichingen," his deeds are recorded by himself with unaffected dignity. There Goethe found materials, such as Shakespeare found in Holinshed and Saxo-Grammaticus; and used them in the same free spirit. He has dramatised the *chronicle* — made it live and move before us: but he has dramatised a chronicle, not written a drama. The distinction is drawn for a reason which will presently appear.

Viehoff has pointed out the use which has been made of the chronicle, and the various elements which have been added from the poet's own invention. The English reader cannot be expected to feel the same interest in such details as the German reader does; it is enough therefore to refer the curious to the passage,[1] and only cite the characters invented by Goethe; these are Adelheid, the voluptuous, fascinating demon; Elizabeth, the noble wife, in whom Goethe's mother saw herself; Maria, a reminiscence of Frederika; Georg, Franz Lerse, Weislingen, and the Gipsies. The death of Götz is also new. The tower mentioned by Goethe is still extant at Heilbronn, under the name of Götzen's Thurm. The rest, including the garden, is the creation of the poet. Götz was confined for only one night in that tower. His death, which according to the play must have happened in 1525, did not occur till 1562, when the burly old knight, upwards of eighty, died at his castle of Horberg, at peace with all men

[1] Goethe's "Leben," vol. ii. pp. 77, 79.

and in perfect freedom. His tomb may be seen at the monastery of Schönthal.[1]

Götz was a dramatic chronicle, not a drama. It should never have been called a drama, but left in its original shape with its original title. This would have prevented much confusion; especially with reference to Shakespeare, and his form of dramatic composition. While no one can mistake the *influence* of Shakespeare in this work, there is great laxity of language in calling it Shakespearian. Critics are judges who mostly rely on precedents with the rigour of judges on the bench. They pronounce according to precedent. That indeed is their office. No sooner has an original work made its appearance, than one of these two courses is invariably pursued; it is rejected by the critics because it does not range itself under any acknowledged class, and thus is branded because it is not an imitation; or it is quietly classified under some acknowledged head. The latter was the case with "Götz von Berlichingen." Because it set the unities at defiance, and placed the people beside the nobles on the scene; because, instead of declaiming, the persons spoke dramatically to the purpose; because, in short, it did *not* range under the acknowledged type of French tragedy, it was supposed to range under the Shakespearian type — the only accepted antagonist to the French.

Is it like Othello? Is it like Macbeth? Is it like Henry IV., King John, Julius Cæsar, or any one unquestioned play by Shakespeare? Unless the words "Shakespearian style" are meaningless, people must mean that "Götz" resembles Shakespeare's plays in the structure and organisation of plot, in the delineation of character, and in the tone of dialogue; yet a cursory review of the play will convince any one that in all

[1] Count Joseph Berlichingen, the present representative of the family, has recently published a "Life of Götz," but it has not reached me.

these respects it is singularly *unlike* Shakespeare's plays.

In *construction* it differs from Shakespeare, first, as intended to represent an *epoch* rather than a *story;* secondly, as taking the licenses of narrative art, instead of keeping the stage always in view, and submitting to the stern necessities of theatrical representation; thirdly, as wanting in that central unity round which all the persons and events are grouped, so as to form a work of art. It is a succession of scenes: a story of episodes.

In the presentation of character the work is no less un-Shakespearian. Our national bigotry, indeed, assumes that every masterly portraiture of character is Shakespearian; an assumption which cannot consistently maintain itself in the presence of Sophocles, Racine, and Goethe. Each poet has a manner of his own; and Shakespeare's manner is assuredly not visible in "Götz von Berlichingen," wherein the characters move before us with singular distinctness in their external characteristics, but do not as in Shakespeare involuntarily betray the inmost secret of their being. We know them by their language and their acts; we do not know their thoughts, their self-sophistications, their involved and perplexed motives partially obscured even to themselves, and seen by us in the cross lights which break athwart their passionate utterances. To take a decisive example: Weislingen is at once ambitious and irresolute, well-meaning and weak.[1] The voice of friendship awakens remorse in him, and forces him to accept the proffered hand of Götz. He swears never again to enter the bishop's palace. But, easily seduced by high thoughts, he is afterward seduced as easily by vanity; tempted he falls; turns once more against his noble friend; and dies betrayed and poisoned by the wife to

[1] In his vacillation, Goethe meant to stigmatise his own weakness with regard to Frederika, as he tells us in the "Wahrheit und Dichtung."

whom he has sacrificed all — dies unpitied by others, despicable to himself. This vacillation is truthful, but not truthfully presented. We who only see the conduct cannot explain it. We stand before an enigma, as in real life; not before a character such as Art enables us to see, and see through. It is not the business of Art to present enigmas; and Shakespeare, in his strongest, happiest moods, contrives to let us see into the wavering depths of the *souls*, while we follow the *actions* of his characters. Contrast Weislingen with such vacillating characters as Richard II., King John, or Hamlet. The difference is not of degree, but of kind.

Nor is the language Shakespearian. It is powerful, picturesque, clear, dramatic; but it is not pregnant with thought, obscured in utterance, and heavy with that superfœtation of ideas, which is a characteristic and often a fault in Shakespeare. It has not his redundancy and prodigal imagery. Indeed, the absence of all rhetorical amplification, and of all delight in imagery for its own sake, is very singular, and in the production of a boy especially so.

It was the first-born of the Romantic School, or rather of the tendency from which that school issued; and its influence has been widespread. It gave the impulse and direction to Scott's historical genius, which has altered our conceptions of the past, and given new life to History. It made the Feudal Ages a subject of eager and almost universal interest. It decided the fate of French tragedy in German literature. But its influence on dramatic art has been, I think, more injurious than beneficial, and mainly because the distinction between a dramatised chronicle and a drama has been lost sight of.

This injurious influence is traceable in the excessive importance it has given to local colour, and the intermingling of the historic with the dramatic element.

Any one at all acquainted with the productions of the Romantic School in Germany or France will understand this. Goethe's object not being to write a drama but to dramatise a picture of the times, local colour was of primary importance; and because he made it so attractive, others have imitated him in departments where it is needless. Nay, critics are so persuaded of its importance, that they strain every phrase to show us that Shakespeare was also a great painter of times: forgetting that local colouring is an appeal to a critical and learned audience, not an appeal to the heart and imagination. It is history, not drama. Macbeth in a bag-wig, with a small sword at his side, made audiences tremble at the appalling ruin of a mind entangled in crime. The corrected costume would not make that tragedy more appalling, had we not now grown so critical that we demand historical "accuracy," where, in the true dramatic age, they only demand passion. The merest glance at our dramatic literature will suffice to show the preponderating (and misplaced) influence of History, in the treatment, no less than in the subjects chosen.

"Götz," as a picture of the times, is an animated and successful work; but the eighteenth century is on more than one occasion rudely thrust into the sixteenth; and on this ground Hegel denies its claim to the highest originality. "An original work appears as the creation of *one* mind, which, admitting of no external influence, fuses the whole work in one mould, as the events therein exhibited were fused. If it contains scenes and motives which do not naturally evolve themselves from the original materials, but are brought together from far and wide, then the internal unity becomes necessarily destroyed, and these scenes betray the author's subjectivity. For example, Goethe's 'Götz' has been greatly lauded for originality, nor can we deny that he has therein boldly trampled under foot all the

rules and theories which were then accepted: but the execution is notwithstanding not thoroughly original. One may detect in it the poverty of youth. Several traits, and even scenes, instead of being evolved from the real subject, are taken from the current topics of the day. The scene, for example, between Götz and brother Martin, which is an allusion to Luther, contains notions gathered from the controversies of Goethe's own day, when — especially in Germany — people were pitying the monks because they drank no wine, and because they had passed the vows of chastity and obedience. Martin, on the other hand, is enthusiastic in his admiration of Götz, and his knightly career: 'When you return back laden with spoils, and say, such a one I struck from his horse ere he could discharge his piece; such another I overthrew, horse and man; and then returning to your castle, you find your wife.' . . . Here Martin wipes his eyes and pledges the wife of Götz. Not so — not with such thoughts did Luther begin, but with quite another religious conviction!"

"In a similar style," Hegel continues, "Basedow's pedagogy is introduced. Children, it was said, learn much that is foolish and unintelligible to them; and the real method was to make them learn objects, not names. Karl thus speaks to his father just as he would have spoken in Goethe's time from parrot-memory: 'Jaxt-hausen is a village and castle upon the Jaxt, which has been the property and heritage for two hundred years of the Lords of Berlichingen.' 'Do you know the Lord of Berlichingen?' asks Götz; the child stares at him, and from pure erudition knows not his own father. Götz declares that *he* knew every pass, pathway, and ford about the place, before he knew the name of the village, castle, or river."[1]

Considered with reference to the age in which it

[1] Hegel's "Vorlesungen über die Æsthetik," i. p. 382.

was produced, "Götz von Berlichingen" is a marvellous work: a work of daring power, of vigour, of originality; a work to form an epoch in the annals of letters. Those who now read it as the work of the great Goethe may be somewhat disappointed; but at the time of its appearance no such "magnificent monster" had startled the pedantries and proprieties of the schools; — "a piece," said the critic in the *Teutsche Mercur* of the day, "wherein the three unities are shamefully outraged, and which is neither a tragedy nor a comedy, and is, notwithstanding, the most beautiful, the most captivating monstrosity."

The breathless rapidity of movement renders a first reading too hurried for proper enjoyment; but on recurring to the briefly indicated scenes, we are amazed at their fulness of life. How marvellous, for example, is that opening scene of the fifth act (removed from the second version), where Adelheid is in the gipsies' tent! Amid the falling snow shines the lurid gleam of the gipsy fire, around which move dusky figures; and this magnificent creature stands shuddering as she finds herself in the company of an old crone who tells her fortune, while a wild-eyed boy gazes ardently on her and alarms her with his terrible admiration; the whole scene lives, yet the touches which call it into life are briefer than in any other work I can remember.

CHAPTER III.

WETZLAR.

In the spring of 1772 he arrived at Wetzlar with "Götz" in his portfolio, and in his head many wild, unruly thoughts. A passage in the Autobiography amusingly illustrates his conception of the task he had undertaken in choosing to inform the world of his early history. Remember that at Wetzlar he fell in love with Charlotte, and lived through the experience which was fused into "Werther," and you will smile as you hear him say: "What occurred to me at Wetzlar is of no great importance, but it may receive a higher interest if the reader will allow me to give a cursory glance at the history of the Imperial Chamber, in order to present to his mind the unfavourable moment at which I arrived." This it is to write autobiography when one has outlived almost the memories of youth, and lost sympathy with many of its agitations. At the time he was in Wetzlar he would have looked strangely on any one who ventured to tell him that the history of the Imperial Chamber was worth a smile from Charlotte; but at the time of writing his meagre account of Wetzlar, he had, perhaps, some difficulty in remembering what Charlotte's smiles were like. The biographer has a difficult task to make any coherent story out of this episode.[1]

[1] Fortunately, during the very months in which I was writing this work, there appeared an invaluable record in the shape of the correspondence between Goethe and Kestner, so often alluded to

Wetzlar is a picturesque town, the effect of which is striking as one approaches it through the avenue of lime-trees on the banks of the Fulda; its ancient church, of a reddish hue, rearing over the gray roofs of the houses, has a fine effect, especially when a declining sun lights up the ruined castle on the summit of the bold hill, the Kalsmunt which fronts the town. One finds oneself in the old German world on entering its quiet humpbacked streets, through which the river meanders; and naturally one's first visit is to the now dilapidated, but deeply interesting, *teutsche Haus*, at the extremity of the town, lured there by the image of Werther's Lotte even more than by any historical curiosity, though this also has its attraction.

Das teutsche Haus was one of the remnants of the ancient institution of the *Teutsche Ritter*, or Teutonic Order of Knighthood, celebrated in German mediæval history. The student is familiar with the black armour and white mantles of these warrior-priests, who fought with the zeal of missionaries and the terrible valour of knights, conquering for themselves a large territory, and still greater influence. But it fared with them as with the knights of other Orders. Their strength lay in their zeal; their zeal abated with success. Years brought them increasing wealth, but the spiritual wealth and glory of their cause departed. They became what all corporations inevitably become; and at the time now written of they were reduced to a level with the Knights of Malta. The Order still possessed property in various parts of Germany, and in certain towns there was a sort of steward's house, where rents

by literary historians, but so imperfectly known ("Goethe und Werther. Briefe Goethe's meistens aus seiner Jugendzeit." Herausgegeben von A. Kestner: 1854). This book, which is very much in need of an editor, is one of the richest sources to which access has been had for a right understanding of Goethe's youth; and it completes the series of corroborative evidence by which to control the Autobiography.

were collected and the business of the Order transacted; this was uniformly styled *das teutsche Haus.*

On Goethe's arrival at Wetzlar, *das teutsche Haus* had for its *Amtmann*, or superintendent, one Herr Buff, whose daughter Charlotte was to inspire a passion which has immortalised the family.[1] On her account, and not on account of the old Ritterthum, the house is still preserved; and pilgrims visit it to see her room, and its relics of her, the drawing-book of patterns for embroidery, the old clock and three glasses (one minus its stem), and her harpsichord, with its black keys. Very memorable to me is one summer afternoon when George Eliot sat at that harpsichord, and lightly touched its plaintive jingling keys, which sounded like the quavering of an old woman's voice; never did the duet from Grétry's "Richard Cœur-de-Lion" seem more touching!

Beside this remnant of the ancient Ritterthum, Goethe, on his arrival, found a burlesque parody, in the shape of a Round Table and its Knights, bearing such names as St. Amand the Opinionative, Eustace the Prudent, Lubormirsky the Combative, and so forth. It was founded by August Friedrich von Goué, Secretary to the Brunswick Embassy, of whom we shall hear more: a wild and whimsical fellow, not without a streak of genius, who drank himself to death. He bore the title of Ritter Coucy, and christened Goethe "*Götz von Berlichingen der Redliche* — Götz the Honest." In an imitation of "Werther" which Goué wrote,[2] a scene introduces this Round Table at one of its banquets at the Tavern; a knight sings a French song, whereupon Götz exclaims, "Thou a German Ritter, and singest foreign songs!" Another knight asks

[1] The celebrated living physicist, Professor Buff, is a descendant of the Amtmann.

[2] "Masuren, oder der junge Werther. Ein Trauerspiel aus dem Illyrischen." 1775.

Götz, "How far have you advanced with the monument which you are to erect to your ancestor?" Götz replies, "It goes quietly forward. Methinks it will be a slap in the face to pedants and the public."[1]

Of this Round Table and its buffooneries, Goethe has merely told us that he entered heartily into the fun at first, but soon wearying of it, relapsed into his melancholy fits. "I have made many acquaintances," says Werther, "but have found no society. I know not what there is about me so attractive that people seek my company with so much ardour. They hang about me, though I cannot walk two steps in their path." A description of him, written by Kestner at this period, is very interesting, as it gives us faithfully the impression he produced on his acquaintances before celebrity had thrown its halo round his head, and dazzled the perceptions of his admirers:

"In the spring there came here a certain Goethe, by trade[2] a *Doctor Juris*, twenty-three years old, only son of a very rich father; in order — this was his father's intention — that he might get some experience in *praxi*, but according to his own intention, that he might study Homer, Pindar, etc., and whatever else his genius, his manner of thinking, and his heart might suggest to him.

"At the very first the *beaux esprits* here announced him to the public as a colleague, and as a collaborator in the new Frankfort *Gelehrte Zeitung*, parenthetically also as a philosopher, and gave themselves trouble to become intimate with him. As I do not belong to this class of people, or rather am not so much in general society, I did not know Goethe until later, and quite

[1] "Ein Stück das Meister und Gesellen auf's Maul schlägt." Cited by Appell; "Werther und seine Zeit," p. 38.

[2] *Seiner Handthierung nach.* The word is old German, and now fallen out of use, although the verb *handthieren* is still occasionally used.

by accident. One of the most distinguished of our *beaux esprits*, the secretary of legation, Gotter, persuaded me one day to go with him to the village of Garbenheim — a common walk. There I found him on the grass, under a tree, lying on his back, while he talked to some persons standing around him — an epicurean philosopher (Von Goué, a great genius), a stoic philosopher (Von Kielmansegge), and a hybrid between the two (Doctor König) — and thoroughly enjoyed himself. He was afterward glad that I had made his acquaintance under such circumstances. Many things were talked of — some of them very interesting. This time, however, I formed no other judgment concerning him than that he was no ordinary man. You know that I do not judge hastily. I found at once that he had genius and a lively imagination; but this was not enough to make me estimate him highly.

"Before I proceed further, I must attempt a description of him, as I have since learned to know him better. He has a great deal of talent, is a true genius and a man of character; possesses an extraordinarily vivid imagination, and hence generally expresses himself in images and similes. He often says, himself, that he always speaks figuratively, and can never express himself literally; but that when he is older he hopes to think and say the thought itself as it really is. He is ardent in all his affections, and yet has often great power over himself. His manner of thinking is noble: he is so free from prejudices that he acts as it seems good to him, without troubling himself whether it will please others, whether it is the fashion, whether conventionalism allows it. All constraint is odious to him.

"He is fond of children, and can occupy himself with them very much. He is *bizarre*, and there are several things in his manner and outward bearing which might make him disagreeable. But with chil-

dren, women, and many others, he is nevertheless a favourite. He has a great respect for the female sex. In *principiis* he is not yet fixed, and is still striving after a sure system. To say something of this, he has a high opinion of Rousseau, but is not a blind worshipper of him. He is not what is called orthodox. Still this is not out of pride or caprice, or for the sake of making himself a *rôle*. On certain important subjects he opens himself to few, and does not willingly disturb the contentment of others in their own ideas. It is true he hates skepticism, strives after truth and after conviction on certain main points, and even believes that he is already convinced as to the weightiest; but as far as I have observed, he is not yet so. He does not go to church or to the sacrament, and prays seldom. For, says he, I am not hypocrite enough for that. Sometimes he seems in repose with regard to certain subjects, sometimes just the contrary. He venerates the Christian religion, but not in the form in which it is presented by our theologians. He believes in a future life, in a better state of existence. He strives after truth, yet values the feeling of truth more than the demonstration. He has already done much, and has many acquirements, much reading; but he has thought and reasoned still more. He has occupied himself chiefly with the *belles lettres* and the fine arts, or rather with all sorts of knowledge, except that which wins bread."

On the margin of the rough draught, Kestner adds: "I wished to describe him, but it would be too long a business, for there is much to be said about him. In one word, *he is a very remarkable man.*"

Further on: "I should never have done, if I attempted to describe him fully."

The Gotter referred to at the opening of this letter was a young man of considerable culture, with whom Goethe became intimate over renewed discussions on

art and criticism. "The opinions of the ancients," he says, "on these important topics I had studied by fits and starts for some years. Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Longinus — none were neglected, but they did not help me, for they presupposed an experience which I needed. They introduced me to a world infinitely rich in works of art; they unfolded the merits of great poets and orators, and convinced me that *a vast abundance of objects must lie before us ere we can think upon them* — that we must accomplish something, nay fail in something, before we can learn our own capacities and those of others. My knowledge of much that was good in ancient literature was merely that of a schoolboy, and by no means vivid. The most splendid orators, it was apparent, had *formed themselves in life*, and we could never speak of them as artists without at the same time mentioning their personal peculiarities. With the poets this was perhaps less the case: but everywhere nature and art came in contact only through life. And thus the result of all my investigations was my old resolution to study Nature, and to allow her to guide me in loving imitation."

Properly to appreciate this passage we must recall the almost universal tendency of the Germans to construct poems in conformity with definite rules, making the poet but a development of the critic. Lessing nobly avowed that he owed all his success to his critical sagacity; Schiller, it is notorious, hampered his genius by fixing on his Pegasus the leaden wings of Kant's philosophy; and Klopstock himself erred in too much criticism. Goethe was the last man to disdain the rich experience of centuries, the last man to imagine that ignorance was an advantageous basis for a poet to stand upon, but he was too thoroughly an artist not to perceive the insufficiency of abstract theories in the production of a work of art which should be the expression of real experience. In conjunction with Gotter he

translated Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," though he speaks slightingly of his share in it. Through Gotter's representations he was also persuaded to publish some little poems in Boie's *Annual.* "I thus[1] came into contact with those," he says, "who, united by youth and talent, afterward effected so much in various ways. Bürger, Voss, Hölty, the two Counts Stolberg, and several others grouped round Klopstock; and in this poetical circle, which extended itself more and more, there was developed a tendency which I know not exactly how to name. One might call it that need of independence which always arises in times of peace — that is to say, precisely when, properly speaking, one is not dependent. In war we bear restraints of force as well as we can; we are physically, but not morally wounded; the restraint disgraces no one; it is no shame to serve the time; we grow accustomed to suffering both from foes and friends; we have wishes rather than definite views. On the contrary, in times of peace our love of freedom becomes more and more prominent, and the greater our freedom, the more we wish for it; we will tolerate nothing above us; we will not be restrained; no one shall be restrained! This tender, sometimes morbid, feeling assumes in noble souls the form of justice: such a spirit then manifested itself everywhere; and because but few were oppresed, it was wished to free these from occasional oppression. And thus arose a certain moral contest between individuals and the government, which, however laudable its origin, led to unhappy results. Voltaire, reverenced for his conduct in the affair of Calais, had excited great attention: and in Germany Lavater's proceedings against the *Landvogt* (sheriff of the province) had perhaps been

[1] Duntzer in his "Studien" has thrown doubts on this connection with the Göttingen school having originated in Wetzlar. But the point is of no importance, and Goethe's own version is left undisturbed in the text.

even more striking. The time was approaching when dramatists and novelists sought their villains among ministers and official persons; hence arose a world, half real, half imaginary, of action and reaction, in which the most violent accusations and instigations were made by writers of periodical journals, under the garb of justice, who produced the more powerful effect because they made the public imagine that it was itself the tribunal — *a foolish notion, as no public has an executive power;* and in Germany, dismembered as it was, public opinion neither benefited nor injured any one."

It was a period of deep unrest in Europe: the travail of the French Revolution. In Germany the spirit of the revolution issued from the study and the lecture-hall; it was a literary and philosophic insurrection, with Lessing, Klopstock, Kant, Herder, and Goethe for leaders. Authority was everywhere attacked, because everywhere it had shown itself feeble or tyrannous. The majestic peruke of Louis XIV. was lifted by an audacious hand, which thus revealed the baldness so long concealed. No one *now* believed in that Grand Monarque; least of all Goethe, who had "Götz von Berlichingen" in his portfolio, and to whom Homer and Shakespeare were idols. "Send me no more books," writes Werther, "I will no longer be led, incited, spurred by them. There is storm enough in this breast. I want a cradle-melody, and that I have in all its fulness in Homer. How often do I lull with it my raging blood to rest!" The Kestner correspondence proves, what before was known, that "Werther" is full of autobiography, and that Goethe was then troubled with fits of depression following upon days of the wildest animal spirits. He was fond of solitude; and the lonely hours passed in reading, or making sketches of the landscape in his rough, imperfect style.

"A marvellous serenity has descended on my spirit,"

writes Werther, "to be compared only to the sweet mornings of spring which so charm my heart. I am alone, and here life seems delicious in this spot formed for natures like mine. I am so happy, so filled with the calm feeling of existence, that my art suffers. I cannot sketch, yet never was I a greater painter than at this moment! When the dear valley clothes itself in vapour, and the sun shines on the top of my impenetrable forest and only a few gleams steal into its sanctuary, while I lie stretched in the tall grass by the cascade, curiously examine the many grasses and weeds, and contemplate the little world of insects with their innumerable forms and colours, and feel within me the presence of the Almighty who formed us after his own image, the breath of the All-loving who sustains us in endless bliss, — my friend, when my eyes are fixed on all these objects, and the world images itself in my soul like the form of a beloved, then I yearn and say: Ah! couldst thou but express that which lives within thee, that it should be the mirror of thy soul, as thy soul is the mirror of the Infinite God!"

The image of Frederika pursued him. It could only be banished by the presence of another. "When I was a boy," he prettily says, in a letter to Salzmann, "I planted a cherry-tree, and watched its growth with delight. Spring frost killed the blossoms, and I had to wait another year before the cherries were ripe — then the birds ate them; another year the caterpillars — then a greedy neighbour — then the blight. Nevertheless, when I have a garden again, I shall again plant a cherry-tree!" He did so:

> "And from Beauty passed to Beauty,
> Constant to a constant change."[1]

The image which was to supplant that of Frederika was none other than that of the Charlotte Buff before

[1] Lord Houghton.

mentioned. Two years before his arrival, her mother had died. The care of the house and children devolved upon her; she was only sixteen, yet good sense, housewifely aptitude, and patient courage carried her successfully through this task. She had for two years been betrothed to Kestner, secretary to the Hanoverian Legation, then aged four and twenty: a quiet, orderly, formal, rational, cultivated man, possessing great magnanimity, as the correspondence proves, and a dignity which is in nowise represented in the Albert of "Werther," from whom we must be careful to distinguish him, in spite of the obvious identity of position. How Goethe came to know Kestner has already been seen; how he came to know Lotte may now be told.[1] The reader with "Werther" in hand may compare the narrative there given with this extract from Kestner's letter to a friend. "It happened that Goethe was at a ball in the country where my maiden and I also were. I could only come late, and was forced to ride after them. My maiden, therefore, drove there in other society. In the carriage was Doctor Goethe, who here first saw Lottchen. He has great knowledge, and has made Nature in her physical and moral aspects his principal study, and has sought the true beauty of both. No woman here had pleased him. Lottchen at once fixed his attention. She is young, and although not regularly beautiful, has a very attractive face. Her glance is as bright as a spring morning, and especially it was so that day, for she loves dancing. She was gay, and in quite a simple dress. He noticed her feeling for the beauty of Nature, and her unforced wit, — rather humour than wit. He did not know she was betrothed. I came a few hours later; and it is not our custom in public to testify anything beyond friendship to each other. He was exces-

[1] Lotte and Lottchen, it is perhaps not altogether superfluous to add, are the favourite diminutives of Charlotte.

sively gay (this he often is, though at other times melancholy); Lottchen quite fascinated him, the more so because she took no trouble about it, but gave herself wholly to the pleasure of the moment. The next day, of course, Goethe called to inquire after her. He had seen her as a lively girl, fond of dancing and pleasure; he now saw her under another and a better aspect, — in her domestic quality."

To judge from her portraits, both in youth and old age, Lotte must, in her way, have been a charming creature: not intellectually cultivated, not poetical, — above all, not the sentimental girl described by Werther; but a serene, calm, joyous, open-hearted German maiden, an excellent housewife, and a priceless manager. Goethe at once fell in love with her. An extract from Kestner's account will tell us more. After describing his engagement to Lotte, he adds: "She is not strictly a brilliant beauty, according to the common opinion; to me she is one: she is, notwithstanding, the fascinating maiden who might have hosts of admirers, old and young, grave and gay, clever and stupid, etc. But she knows how to convince them quickly that their only safety must be sought in flight or in friendship. One of these, as the most remarkable, I will mention, because he retains an influence over us. A youth in years (twenty-three), but in knowledge, and in the development of his mental powers and character, already a man, an extraordinary genius, and a man of character, was here, — as his family believed, for the sake of studying the law, but in fact to track the footsteps of Nature and Truth, and to study Homer and Pindar. He had no need to study for the sake of a maintenance. Quite by chance, after he had been here some time, he became acquainted with Lottchen, and saw in her his ideal: he saw her in her joyous aspect, but was soon aware that this was not her best side; he learned to know her also in her domestic position,

and, in a word, became her adorer. It could not long remain unknown to him that she could give him nothing but friendship; and her conduct toward him was admirable. Our coincidence of taste, and a closer acquaintance with each other, formed between him and me the closest bond of friendship. Meanwhile, although he was forced to renounce all hope in relation to Lottchen, and *did* renounce it, yet he could not, with all his philosophy and natural pride, so far master himself as completely to repress his inclination. And he has qualities which might make him dangerous to a woman, especially to one of susceptibility and taste. But Lottchen knew how to treat him so as not to encourage vain hope, and yet make him admire her manner toward him. His peace of mind suffered: there were many remarkable scenes, in which Lottchen's behaviour heightened my regard for her; and he also became more precious to me as a friend; but I was often inwardly astonished that love can make such strange creatures even of the strongest and otherwise the most self-sustained men. I pitied him, and had many inward struggles; for, on the one hand, I thought that I might not be in a position to make Lottchen so happy as he would make her; but, on the other hand, I could not endure the thought of losing her. The latter feeling conquered, and in Lottchen I have never once been able to perceive a shadow of the same conflict."

Another extract will place this conflict in its true light: "I am under no further engagement to Lottchen than that under which an honourable man stands when he gives a young woman the preference above all others, makes known that he desires the like feeling from her, and when she gives it, receives from her not only this but a complete acquiescence. This I consider quite enough to bind an honourable man, especially when such a relation lasts several years. But in my case there is this in addition, that Lottchen and

I have expressly declared ourselves, and still do so with pleasure, without any oaths and asseverations." This absence of any *legal* tie between them must have made Kestner's position far more trying. It gives a higher idea both of his generous forbearance and of the fascination exercised by Goethe: for what a position! and how much nobility on all sides was necessary to prevent petty jealousies ending in a violent rupture! Certain it is that the greatest intimacy and the most affectionate feelings were kept up *without* disturbance. Confident in the honour of his friend and the truth of his mistress, Kestner never spoiled the relation by a hint of jealousy. Goethe was constantly in Lotte's house, where his arrival was a jubilee to the children, who seized hold of him, as children always take loving possession of those who are indulgent to them, and forced him to tell them stories. It is a pleasant sight to see Goethe with children; he always shows such hearty fondness for them; and these brothers and sisters of Lotte were doubly endeared to him because they belonged to her.

One other figure in this Wetzlar set arrests our attention: it is that of a handsome blonde youth, with soft blue eyes and a settled melancholy expression. His name is Jerusalem, and he is the son of the venerable Abbot of Riddagshausen.[1] He is here attached as secretary to the Brunswick Legation, a colleague, therefore, of Von Goué. He is deeply read in English literature, and has had the honour of Lessing's friendship; a friendship subsequently expressed in the following terms, when Lessing, acting as his editor, wrote the preface to his Philosophical Essays: "When he came to Wolfenbüttel he gave me his friendship. I did not enjoy it long, but I cannot easily name one

[1] No Catholic, as this title might seem to imply, but a Protestant; his abbey, secularised two centuries before, yielded him only a title and revenues.

who in so short a space of time excited in me more affection. It is true I only learned to know one side of his nature, but it was the side which explains all the rest. It was the desire for clear knowledge; the talent to follow truth to its last consequences; the spirit of cold observation; but an ardent spirit not to be intimidated by truth. . . . How sensitive, how warm, how active this young inquirer was, how true a man among men, is better known to more intimate friends." The Essays which these words introduce are five in number; the titles are given below.[1]

The melancholy of his disposition led him to think much of suicide, which he defended on speculative grounds. And this melancholy, and these meditations, were deepened by an unhappy passion for the wife of one of his friends. The issue of that passion we shall have to narrate in a future chapter. For the present it is enough to indicate the presence of this youth among the circle of Goethe's acquaintances. They saw but little of each other, owing to the retiring sensitiveness of Jerusalem; probably the same cause had kept them asunder years before in Leipsic, where they were fellow students; but their acquaintance furnished Goethe with materials which he was afterward to use in his novel.

Jerusalem's unhappy passion and Goethe's unhappy passion, one would think, must have been a bond of union between them; but in truth Goethe's passion can scarcely have been called "unhappy" — it was rather a delicious uneasiness. Love in the profound, absorbing sense it was not. It was an *imaginative passion*, in which the poet was more implicated than the man. Lotte excited his imagination; her beauty,

[1] I. Dass die Sprache dem ersten Menschen durch Wunder nicht mitgetheilt sein kann. II. Ueber die Natur und den Ursprung der allgemeinen und abstrakten Begriffe. III. Ueber die Freiheit. IV. Ueber die Mendelssohn'sche Theorie vom sinnlichen Vergnügen. V. Ueber die vermischten Empfindungen.

her serene gaiety, her affectionate manners, charmed him; the romance of his position heightened the charm, by giving an *unconscious security* to his feelings. I am persuaded that if Lotte had been free, he would have fled from her as he fled from Frederika. In saying this, however, I do not mean that the impossibility of obtaining her gave him any comfort. He was restless, impatient, and, in a certain sense, unhappy. He believed himself to be desperately in love with her, when in truth he was only in love with the indulgence of the emotions he excited; a paradox which will be no mystery to those acquainted with the poetic temperament.

Thus passed the summer. In August he made a little excursion to Giessen, to see Professor Höpfner, one of the active writers in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen*. Characteristically he calls on the professor incognito, presenting himself as a shy, awkward student; which, as Höpfner only knows him through correspondence, is facile enough. The comic scene ends by his jumping into the professor's arms, exclaiming, "I am Goethe!" In Giessen he found Merck. He persuaded him to return to Wetzlar, to be introduced to Lotte. Merck came; but so far from undervaluing her, as the very inaccurate account in the Autobiography would have us understand, Merck wrote to a friend: "J'ai trouvé aussi l'amie de Goethe, cette fille dont il parle avec tant d'enthousiasme dans toutes ses lettres. Elle mérite réellement tout ce qu'il pourra dire du bien sur son compte."[1] He exasperated Goethe by preferring the "Juno form" of one of her friends, and pointing her out as the more worthy of attention, because she was disengaged. That Goethe should have been offended, was in the order of things; but in the retrospective glance which he gave to this period in his old

[1] "Briefe aus dem Freundeskreise von Goethe, Herder, Merck," p. 59.

age, he ought to have detected the really friendly spirit animating Merck; he ought not to have likened him to Mephistopheles; the more so as Merck's representations were really effectual, and hastened the dénouement. Every day made Goethe's position less tenable. At last he consented to tear himself away, and accompany Merck in a trip down the Rhine. It was time. Whatever factitious element there may have been in his romance, the situation was full of danger; indulgence in such emotions would have created at last a real and desperate passion; there was safety but in flight.

Merck left Wetzlar, having arranged that Goethe should join him at Coblentz. The following extracts from Kestner's Diary will remind the reader of Goethe's departure from Leipsic without saying adieu to Käthchen. His dislike of "scenes" made him shrink from those emotions of leave-taking usually so eagerly sought by lovers.

"*Sept. 10, 1772.* To-day Doctor Goethe dined with me in the garden; I did not know that it was the last time. In the evening Doctor Goethe came to the *teutsche Haus*. He, Lottchen, and I, had a remarkable conversation about the future state; about going away and returning, etc., which was not begun by him, but by Lottchen. We agreed that the one who died first should, if he could, give information to the living, about the conditions of the other life. Goethe was quite cast down, for he knew that the next morning he was to go."

"*Sept. 11, 1772.* This morning at seven o'clock Goethe set off without taking leave. He sent me a note with some books. He had long said that about this time he would make a journey to Coblentz, where the paymaster of the forces, Merck, awaited him, and that he would say no good-byes, but set off suddenly. So I had expected it. But that I was, notwithstanding, unprepared for it, I have felt — felt deep in my soul.

In the morning I came home. 'Herr Doctor Goethe sent this at ten o'clock.' I saw the books and the note, and thought what this said to me — 'He is gone!' — and was quite dejected. Soon after, Hans[1] came to ask me if he were really gone? The *Geheime Räthin* Langen had sent to say by a maid servant: 'It was very ill-mannered of Doctor Goethe to set off in this way, without taking leave.' Lottchen sent word in reply: 'Why had she not taught her nephew better?' Lottchen, in order to be certain, sent a box which she had of Goethe's to his house. He was no longer there. In the middle of the day the *Geheime Räthin* Langen sent word again: 'She would, however, let Doctor Goethe's mother know how he had conducted himself.' Every one of the children in the *teutsche Haus* was saying: '*Doctor Goethe is gone!*' In the middle of the day I talked with Herr von Born, who had accompanied him, on horseback, as far as Brunnfells. Goethe had told him of our evening's conversation. Goethe had set out in very low spirits. In the afternoon I took Goethe's note to Lottchen. She was sorry about his departure; the tears came into her eyes while reading. Yet it was a satisfaction to her that he was gone, since she could not give him the affection he desired. We spoke only of him; indeed, I could think of nothing else, and defended the manner of his leaving, which was blamed by a silly person; I did it with much warmth. Afterward I wrote him word what had happened since his departure."

How graphically do these simple touches set the whole situation before us: the sorrow of the two lovers at the departure of their friend, and the consternation of the children on hearing that Doctor Goethe is gone! One needs such a picture to reassure us that the episode, with all its strange romance, and with all its danger, was not really a fit of morbid sentimen-

[1] One of Lotte's brothers.

talism. Indeed, had Goethe been the sentimental Werther he has represented, he would never have had the strength of will to tear himself from such a position. He would have blown his brains out, as Werther did. On the other hand, note what a worthy figure is this of Kestner, compared with the cold Albert of the novel. A less generous nature would have rejoiced in the absence of a rival, and forgotten, in its joy, the loss of a friend. But Kestner, who knew that his friend was his rival, — and such a rival that doubts crossed him whether this magnificent youth were not really more capable of rendering Lotte happy than he himself was, — grieved for the absence of his friend!

Here is Goethe's letter, referred to in the passage just quoted from the Diary:

"He is gone, Kestner; when you get this note, he is gone! Give Lottchen the enclosed. I am quite composed, but your conversation has torn me to pieces. At this moment I can say nothing to you but farewell. If I had remained a moment longer with you I could not have restrained myself. Now I am alone, and to-morrow I go. Oh, my poor head!"

This was the enclosure, addressed to Lotte:

"I certainly hope to come again, but God knows when! Lotte, what did my heart feel while you were talking, knowing, as I did, that it was the last time I should see you? Not the last time, and yet to-morrow I go away. He is gone! What spirit led you to that conversation? When I was expected to say all I felt, alas! what I cared about was here below, was your hand, which I kissed for the last time. The room which I shall not enter again, and the dear father who saw me to the door for the last time. I am now alone, and may weep; I leave you happy, and shall remain in your heart. And shall see you again; *but not to-morrow is never!* Tell my boys, He is gone. I can say no more."

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARATIONS FOR WERTHER.

HAVING sent his luggage to the house of Frau von La Roche, where he was to meet Merck, he made the journey down the Lahn on foot. A delicious sadness subdued his thoughts as he wandered dreamily along the river banks; and the lovely scenes which met his eye solicited his pencil, awakening once more the ineffectual desire (which from time to time haunted him) of becoming a painter. He had really no faculty in this direction, yet the desire, often suppressed, now rose up in such a serious shape, that he resolved to settle for ever whether he should devote himself to the art or not. The test was curious. The river glided beneath, now flashing in the sunlight, now partially concealed by willows. Taking a knife from his pocket, he flung it with his left hand into the river, having previously resolved that if he saw it fall he was to become an artist; but if the sinking knife were concealed by the willows, he was to abandon the idea. No ancient oracle was ever more ambiguous than the answer now given him. The willows concealed the sinking knife, but the water splashed up like a fountain, and was distinctly visible. So indefinite an answer left him in doubt.[1]

[1] This mode of interrogating fate recalls that strange passage in Rousseau's "Confessions" (Livre VI.) where he throws a stone at a tree: if he hits, it is a sign of salvation; if he misses, of damnation! Fortunately he hits: "Ce qui, véritablement, n'était pas difficile, car j'avais eu le soin de le choisir fort gros et fort

He wandered pleasantly on the banks till he reached Ems, and then journeyed down the river in a boat. The old Rhine opened upon him; and he mentions with peculiar delight the magnificent situation of Oberlahnstein, and, above all, the majesty of the castle of Ehrenbreitstein. On arriving at the house of Geheimrath von La Roche, where he had been announced by Merck, he was most kindly received by this excellent family. His literary tendencies bound him to the mother; his joyousness and strong sense, to the father; his youth and poetry, to the daughters. The Frau von La Roche, Wieland's earliest love, had written a novel in the Richardson style, "Die Geschichte des Fräulein von Sternheim;" and Schäfer remarks that she probably gathered Merck, Goethe, and others into her house with a view to favourable criticisms of this novel. If this were her design, she succeeded with Goethe, who reviewed her book in the *Frankfurter Gelehrten Anzeigen.* Whether this compliance was extorted by herself, or by the charms of her daughter Maximiliane, history saith not: certain it is that the dark eyes of the daughter made an impression on the heart of the young reviewer. She is the Mlle. B. introduced in "Werther;" but she is even still more interesting to us as the future mother of Bettina. They seemed to have looked into each other's eyes, flirted and sentimentalised, as if no Lotte had been left in Wetzlar. Nor will this surprise those who have considered the mobile nature of our poet. He is miserable at moments, but the fulness of abounding life, the strength of victorious will, and the sensibility to new impressions, keep his ever-active nature from

près; depuis lors je n'ai plus douté de mon salut." Had Goethe read this passage? The "Confessions" appeared in 1768, that is, four years before this journey down the Lahn. Yet from a passage in one of his letters to the Frau von Stein, it seems as if he then, 1782, first read the "Confessions."

the despondency which killed Werther. He is not always drooping because Charlotte is another's. He is open to every new impression, serious or gay. Thus, among other indications, we find him throwing off in "Pater Brey" and "Satyros," sarcasm and humour which are curious as products of the "Werther" period, although of no absolute worth; and we follow him up the Rhine, in company with Merck, and his family, leisurely enjoying Rheinfels, St. Goar, Bacharach, Bingen, Elfeld, and Biberich, —

"The blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, corn-field, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles, breathing stern farewells
From gray but leafy walls where Ruin greenly dwells" —

sketching as if life were a leisure summer day.

He returned to Frankfort, and busied himself with law, literature, and painting. Wandering Italians, then rare, brought casts of antique statues to Frankfort; and with delighted eagerness he purchased a complete set, thus to revive as much as possible the grand impression he received at Mannheim. Among his art-studies must be noted the attention bestowed on the Dutch painters. He began to copy some still-life pictures; one of these he mentions with pride; and what, think you, this one was? — a copy of a tortoise-shell knife-handle inlaid with silver! He has "Götz von Berlichingen" in his portfolio, and delights in copying the copy of a knife-handle!

To law he devoted himself with greater assiduity than ever. His father, delighted at going through the papers with him, was peculiarly gratified at this honourable diligence, and in his delight was willing to overlook the other occupations of this "singular creature," as he rightly named him. Goethe's literary plans were numerous, and the *Frankfort Journal* gave him constant opportunities for expressing himself on poetry,

theology, and even politics. Very significant is the following passage from one of these articles, in reply to the complaint that the Germans had no Fatherland, no Patriotism. "When we have a place in the world where we can repose with our property, a field to nourish us, and a house to cover us, have we not there our Fatherland? and have not thousands upon thousands in every city got this? and do they not live happy in their limited sphere? Wherefore, then, this vain striving for a sentiment we neither have nor can have, a sentiment which only in certain nations, and in certain periods, is the result of many concurrent circumstances? Roman patriotism! God defend us from it, as from a giant! we could not find the stool upon which to sit, nor the bed on which to lie in such patriotism!" He was also rewriting "Götz von Berlichingen." He found on re-reading the manuscript, that, beside the unities of time and place, he had sinned against the higher unity of composition. He says:

"In abandoning myself to my imagination, I had not deviated much in the beginning, and the first acts were pretty much as had been intended. In the following acts, however, and especially toward the end, I was unconsciously led away by a singular passion. In making Adelheid so lovable, I had fallen in love with her myself, — my pen was unconsciously devoted to her alone, — the interest in her fate gained the preponderance; and as, moreover, Götz, toward the end, has little to do, and afterward only returns to an unhappy participation in the Peasant War, nothing was more natural than that a charming woman should supplant him in the mind of the author, who, casting off the fetters of art, thought to open a new field. I was soon sensible of this defect, or rather this culpable superfluity, since my poetical nature always impelled me to unity. Instead of the biography of Götz and German antiquities, I now confined my attention to

my own work, to give it more and more historical and national substance, and to cancel that which was fabulous or passionate. In this I indeed sacrificed much, as the inclination of the man had to yield to the conviction of the artist. Thus, for instance, I had placed Adelheid in a terrific nocturnal gipsy scene, where she produced a great effect by her beautiful presence. A nearer examination banished her; and the love-affair between Franz and his gracious lady, which was very circumstantially carried on in the fourth and fifth acts, was much condensed, and only the chief points indicated.

"Without altering the manuscript, which I still possess in its original shape, I determined to rewrite the whole, and did this with such activity, that in a few weeks I produced an entirely new version. It had never been my intention to have the second poem printed, as I looked upon this likewise as no more than a preparatory exercise, the foundation of a new work, to be accomplished with greater industry and deliberation.

"When I suggested my plans to Merck, he laughed at me, and asked what was the meaning of this perpetual writing and rewriting? The work, he said, by this means, only becomes different, and seldom better; you must see what effect one thing produces, and then try something new. 'Be in time at the hedge, if you would dry your linen,' he exclaimed, in the words of the proverb: hesitation and delay only make uncertain men. On the other hand, I pointed out how unpleasant it would be to offer a bookseller a work on which I had bestowed so much affection, and perhaps have it refused; for how would they judge of so young, nameless, and audacious an author? As my dread of the press gradually vanished, I wished to see printed my comedy 'Die Mitschuldigen,' upon which I set some value, but I found no publisher inclined to undertake it.

"Here the mercantile taste of my friend was at once excited. He proposed that we should publish at our own expense this singular and striking work, from which we should derive large profit. Like many others, he used often to reckon up the bookseller's profit, which with many works was certainly great, especially if what was lost by other writings and commercial affairs was left out of the calculation. We settled that I should procure the paper, and that he should answer for the printing. To work we went, and I was pleased to see my wild dramatic sketch in clean proof-sheets; it looked really better than I myself expected. We completed the work, and it was sent off in several parcels. It was not long before the attention it excited became universal. But as, with our limited means, the copies could not be forwarded, a pirated edition suddenly made its appearance. As, moreover, there could be no immediate return, especially in ready money, for the copies sent out, and as my treasury was not very flourishing at the time when much attention and applause was bestowed upon me, I was extremely perplexed how to pay for the paper by means of which I had made the world acquainted with my talent. On the other hand, Merck, who knew better how to help himself, was certain that all would soon come right again; but I never perceived that to be the case."

There is some inaccuracy in the foregoing, which a comparison of the first and second versions of the work will rectify. The changes he effected were very slight, and mainly consist in the striking out of the two scenes in which Adelheid plays so conspicuous a part.

A greater inaccuracy, amounting to injustice, is contained in the passage about Herder, as we now learn from the "Posthumous Papers" of the latter, from which it is clear that he *did* greatly admire "Götz,"

and wrote warmly of it to his betrothed, saying, "You will have some heavenly hours of delight when you read it, for there is in it uncommon German strength, depth, and truth, although here and there it is rather schemed than artistically wrought (*nur gedacht*)." Probably in writing to Goethe he was more critical, and as usual with him, somewhat pedagogic; but it is also probable that he was loud in praise, since the poet replies, "Your letter was a consolation. I already rank the work much lower than you do. Your sentence that Shakespeare has quite spoiled me, I admit to the full. The work must be fused anew, freed from its dross, and with newer, better metal cast again. Then it shall appear before you." He seems to have been nettled (not unnaturally) at the sentence, "All is rather schemed than artistically wrought," which, he says, is true of "Emilia Galotti," and prevents his altogether liking it, although a masterpiece. Judging from a tolerably extensive acquaintance with authors in relation to criticism, I should think it highly probable that the longer Goethe pondered on Herder's letter the fainter became his pleasure in the praise, and the stronger his irritation at the blame. I have known a feeling of positive gratitude for a criticism slowly to change into an uneasy and almost indignant impression of injustice having been done. That Goethe did not, on reflection, so entirely concur with the objections he was at first ready to admit, appears from the fact that he did not recast his work.

When "Götz" appeared, the effect on the public was instantaneous, startling. Its bold expression of the spirit of Freedom, its defiance of French criticism, and the originality no less than the power of the writing, carried it triumphant over Germany. It was pronounced a masterpiece in all the *salons* and in all the beer-houses of that uneasy time. Imitations followed with amazing rapidity; the stage was noisy with the

clang of chivalry, and the book-shelves creaked beneath the weight of resuscitated Feudal Times.

An amusing example of "the trade" is mentioned by Goethe. A bookseller paid him a visit, and, with the air of a man well satisfied with his proposal, offered to give an *order* for a dozen plays in the style of "Götz," for which a handsome *honorarium* should be paid. His offer was the more generous, because such was the state of literature at this period, that, in spite of the success Götz achieved, it brought no money to its author — pirated editions circulating everywhere, and robbing him of his reward. Moreover, what the bookseller proposed was what the public expected. When once a writer has achieved success in any direction, he must continue in that direction, or peril his reputation. An opinion has been formed of him; he has been *classed;* and the public will not have its classification disturbed. Nevertheless, if he repeat himself, this unreasoning public declaims against his "poverty." No man ever repeated himself less than Goethe. He did not model a statue, and then amuse himself with taking casts of it in different materials. He lived, thought, and suffered; and because he had lived, thought, and suffered, he wrote. When he had once expressed his experience in a work, he never recurred to it. The true artist, like the snake, casts his skin, but never resumes it. He works according to the impulse from within, not according to the demand from without. And Goethe was a genuine artist, never exhausting a lucky discovery, never working an impoverished vein. Every poem came fresh from life, coined from the mint of his experience.

"Götz" is the greatest product of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. As we before hinted, this period is not simply one of vague wild hopes and retrospections of old German life, it is also one of unhealthy sentimentalism. Goethe, the great representative poet

of his day — the secretary of his age — gives us masterpieces which characterise both these tendencies. Beside the insurgent Götz stands the dreamy Werther. And yet, accurately as these two works represent two active tendencies of the time, they are both far removed above the perishing extravagances of that time; they are both *ideal* expressions of the age, and as free from the disease which corrupted it as Goethe himself was free from the weakness of his contemporaries. Wilkes used to say that he had never been a Wilkite. Goethe was never a Werther. To appreciate the distance which separated him and his works from his sentimental contemporaries and their works, we must study the characters of such men as Jacobi, Klinger, Wagner, and Lenz, or we must read such works as "Woldemar." It will then be plain why Goethe turned with aversion from such works, his own included, when a few years had cleared his insight, and settled his aims. Then also will be seen the difference between genius which idealises the spirit of the age, and talent which panders to it.[1]

It was, indeed, a strange epoch; the unrest was the unrest of disease, and its extravagances were morbid symptoms. In the letters, memoirs, and novels, which still remain to testify to the follies of the age, may be read a self-questioning and sentimental introspection, enough to create in healthy minds a distaste both for sentiment and self-questioning. A factitious air is carried even by the most respectable sentiments; and many *not* respectable array themselves in rose-pink. Nature is seldom spoken of but in hysterical enthusiasm. Tears and caresses are prodigally scattered, and upon the slightest provocations. In Coburg an *Order of Mercy and Expiation* is instituted by sensi-

[1] As Karl Grun epigrammatically says of Goethe and his contemporaries, "He was at once patient and physician; they were patients and nothing else."

tive noodles. Leuchsenring, whom Goethe satirised in "Pater Brey" as a professional sentimentalist, gets up a secret society and calls it the *Order of Sentiment*, to which tender souls think it a privilege to belong. Friendship is fantastically deified; brotherly love draws trembling souls together, not on the solid grounds of affection and mutual service, but on entirely imaginary grounds of "spiritual communion;" whence arose as Jean Paul wittily says, "an universal love for all men and beasts — except reviewers." It was a skeptical epoch, in which everything established came into question. Marriage, of course, came badly off among a set of men who made the first commandment of genius to consist in loving your neighbour *and* your neighbour's wife.

These were symptoms of disease; the social organisation was out of order; a crisis, evidently imminent, was heralded by extravagances in literature, as elsewhere. The cause of the disease was want of faith. In religion, in philosophy, in politics, in morals, this eighteenth century was ostentatious of its disquiet and disbelief. The old faith, which for so long had made European life an organic unity, and which in its tottering weakness had received a mortal blow from Luther, was no longer universal, living, active, dominant; its place of universal directing power was vacant; a new faith had not arisen. The French Revolution was another crisis of that organic disturbance which had previously shown itself in another order of ideas, — in the Reformation. Besides this awful crisis, other minor crises are noticeable. Everywhere the same Protestant spirit breaks through traditions, in morals, in literature, and in education. Whatever is established, whatever rests on tradition, is questioned. The classics are no longer believed in; men begin to maintain the doctrine of progress, and proclaim the superiority of the moderns. Art is pronounced to be

in its nature progressive. Education is no longer permitted to pursue its broad traditional path; the methods which were excellent for the past, no longer suffice for the present; everywhere new methods rise up to ameliorate the old. The divine right of institutions ceases to gain credence. The individual claims and proclaims his freedom: freedom of thought and freedom of act. Freedom is the watchword of the eighteenth century.

Enough has been said to indicate the temper of those times, and to show why "Werther" was a part expression of that temper. Turning to the novel itself, we find it so bound up with the life of its author, that the history of his life at this epoch is the record of the materials from which it was created; we must, therefore, retrace our steps again to the point where Goethe left Wetzlar, and, by the aid of his letters to Kestner, follow the development of this strange romance.

"Götz" was published in the summer of 1773. It was in the autumn of 1772 that Goethe left Wetzlar, and returned home. His letters to Kestner and Charlotte are full of passionate avowals and tender reminiscences. The capricious orthography and grammar to be noticed in them belong to a period when it was thought unworthy of a genius to conform to details so fastidious as correct spelling and good grammar; but the affectionate nature which warms these letters, the abundant love the writer felt and inspired, these belong to him, and not to his age. If a proof were wanted of Goethe's loving disposition, we might refer to these letters, especially those addressed to the young brother of Charlotte. The reader of this biography, however, will need no such proof, and we may therefore confine ourselves to the relation of Goethe to the Kestners. "God bless you, dear Kestner," runs one of the early letters, "and tell Lotte that I often believe I can forget her; but then I have a relapse, and it is

worse with me than ever." He longs once more to be sitting at her feet, letting the children clamber over him. He writes in a strain of melancholy, which is as much poetry as sorrow: when a thought of suicide arises, it is only one among the many thoughts which hurry through his mind. There is a very significant passage in the Autobiography, which aptly describes his real state of mind: "I had a large collection of weapons, and among them a very handsome dagger. This I placed by my bedside every night, and before extinguishing my candle I made various attempts to pierce the sharp point a couple of inches into my breast; but not being able to do it, I laughed myself out of the notion, threw aside all hypochondriacal fancies, and resolved to live." He played with suicidal thoughts, because he was restless, and suicide was a fashionable speculation of the day; but whoever supposes these thoughts of suicide were serious has greatly misunderstood him. He had them not, even at this period; and when he wrote "Werther" he had long thrown off even the faint temptation of poetic longings for death. In October, 1772, the report reaches him that his Wetzlar friend Goué has shot himself: "Write to me at once about Goué," he says to Kestner; "*I honour such an act, and pity mankind*, and let all the Philisters make their tobacco-smoke comments on it and say: There, you see! Nevertheless, I hope never to make my friends unhappy by such an act, myself." He was too full of life to do more than coquet with the idea of death. Here is a confession: "I went to Homburg, and there gained new love of life, seeing how much pleasure the appearance of a miserable thing like me can give such excellent people." On the 7th of November he suddenly appeared in Wetzlar with Schlosser, and stayed there till the 10th, in a feverish, but delicious, enthusiasm. He writes to Kestner on reaching home: "It was assuredly high time

for me to go. Yesterday evening I had thoroughly criminal thoughts as I lay on the sofa. . . . And when I think how above all my hopes your greeting of me was, I am very calm. I confess I came with some anxiety. I came with a pure, warm, full heart, dear Kestner, and it is a hell-pain when one is not received in the same spirit as one brings. But so — God give you a whole life such as those two days were to me!"

The report of Goué's suicide, before alluded to, turned out to be false; but the suicide of Jerusalem was a melancholy fact. Goethe immediately writes to Kestner:

"Unhappy Jerusalem! The news was shocking, and unexpected; it was horrible to have this news as an accompaniment to the pleasantest gift of love. The unfortunate man! But the devil, that is, the infamous men who enjoy nothing but the chaff of vanity, and have the lust of idolatry in their hearts, and preach idolatry, and cramp healthy nature, and overstrain and ruin the faculties, are guilty of this misery, of our misery. If the cursed parson is not guilty, God forgive me that I wish he may break his neck like Eli. The poor young man! When I came back from a walk, and he met me in the moonlight, I said to myself, he is in love. Lotte must still remember that I laughed about it. God knows, loneliness undermined his heart, and for seven years[1] his form has been familiar to me. I have talked little with him. When I came away, I brought with me a book of his; I will keep that and the remembrance of him as long as I live."

Among the many inaccuracies of the Autobiography, there is one of consequence on the subject of "Werther," namely, the assertion that it was the news of Jerusalem's suicide which suddenly set him to work.

[1] This "seven years" refers to the first sight of Jerusalem at Leipsic.

The news reached him in October, 1772, and in November Kestner sent him the narrative of Jerusalem's last days. Not until the middle and end of 1773 did he write "Werther." In fact, the state of his mind at this period is by no means such as the Autobiography describes. Read this letter written in December: "That is wonderful! I was about to ask if Lenchen[1] had arrived, and you write to tell me she is. If I were only there I would nullify your discourse, and astonish all the tailors; I think I should be fonder of her than of Lotte. From the portrait she must be an amiable girl, much better than Lotte, if not precisely the . . . *And I am free and thirsting for love.* I must try and come; yet that would not help me. Here am I once more in Frankfort, and carry plans and fancies about with me, which I should not do if I had but a maiden." In January he seems to have found a maiden, for he writes: "Tell Lotte there is a certain maiden here whom I love heartily, and whom I would choose before all others if I had any thought of marriage, and she also was born on the 11th January.[2] It would be pretty: such a pair! Who knows what God's will is?" I agree with Viehoff against Düntzer, that this alludes to Anna Antoinette Gerock, a relation of Schlosser's, who is known to have loved him passionately, and to have furnished some traits for Mignon. Clear it is that he is not very melancholy. "Yesterday I skated from sunrise to sunset. And I have other sources of joy which I can't relate. Be comforted that I am almost as happy as people who love, like you two, that I am as full of hope, and that I have lately *felt* some poems. My sister greets you, my maiden also greets you, my gods greet you." Thus we see that, although Lotte's picture hangs by his bedside, although her image hovers con-

[1] A sister of Charlotte's.
[2] Lotte's birthday.

stantly before him, and the *teutsche Haus* is the centre of many yearning thoughts, he is not pining despondently for Charlotte. He has rewritten "Götz," and allowed Merck to carry it to the printer's. He is living in a very merry circle, one figure in which is Antoinette Gerock, as we gather from a letter written in February, 1773, a month after that in which he refers to his "maiden." Here is the passage: "At Easter I will send you a quite adventurous novelty.[1] My maiden greets Lotte. In character she has much of Lenchen, and my sister says resembles her portrait. If we were but as much in love as you two — meanwhile I will call her my 'dear little wife,' for recently she fell to me in a lottery as my wife." She was then only fifteen; their relation to each other will be described in Chapter VI.

And now the day approaches when Lotte is to be married and leave Wetzlar. Goethe writes to her brother Hans, begging him, when Lotte departs, to write at least once a week, that the connection with the *teutsche Haus* may not be broken, although its jewel is carried away. He writes to Kestner to be allowed to get the wedding-ring. "I am wholly yours, but from henceforth care not to see you nor Lotte. Her portrait too shall away from my bedroom the day of her marriage, and shall not be restored till I hear she is a mother: and from that moment a new epoch begins, in which I shall not love her, but her children, a little indeed on her account, but that's nothing to do with it; and if you ask me to be godfather, my spirit shall rest upon the boy, and he shall make a fool of himself for a maiden like his mother." Enclosed was this note to Lotte: "May my memory with this ring for ever remain with you in your happiness. Dear Lotte, some time hence we shall see each other again, you with this ring on your finger, and I as always

[1] "Götz."

thine. I know no name or bye-name to sign this with. You know me." When the marriage takes place he writes to Kestner: "God bless you; you have surprised me. I had meant to make a holy sepulchre on Good Friday, and bury Lotte's portrait. But it hangs still by my bed and shall remain there till I die. Be happy. Greet for me your angel, and Lenchen; she shall be the second Lotte, and it shall be as well with her. I wander in the desert where no water is, my hair is my shade, and my blood my spring." The bridesmaid brings him the bridal bouquet, a flower of which he sticks in his hat, as he walks to Darmstadt, in a melancholy mood; but to show that his passion for Charlotte was after all only a poetic passion, here is a passage in the letter he sent to Kestner immediately after the marriage: "O Kestner, when have I envied you Lotte in the human sense? for not to envy you her in the spiritual sense I must be an angel without lungs and liver. Nevertheless I must disclose a secret to you. That you may know and behold. When I attached myself to Lotte, and you know that I was attached to her from my heart, Born talked to me about it, *as people are wont to talk.* 'If I were K. I should not like it. How can it end? You quite cut him out!' and the like. Then I said to him in these very words, in his room, it was in the morning: 'The fact is, I am fool enough to think the girl something remarkable; if she deceived me, and turned out to be as girls usually are, and used K. as capital in order to make the most of her charms, the first moment which discovered that to me, the first moment which brought her nearer to me, would be the last of our acquaintance,' and this I protested and swore. And between ourselves, without boasting, I understand the girl somewhat, and you know how I have felt for her and for everything she has seen and touched, and wherever she has been, and shall continue to feel to the end of

the world. And now see how far I am envious, and must be so. For either I am a fool, which is difficult to believe, or she is the subtlest deceiver, or then — Lotte, the very Lotte of whom we are speaking." A few days afterward he writes: "My poor existence is petrified to barren rock. This summer I lose all. Merck goes. My sister too. And I am alone."

The marriage of Cornelia, his much-loved sister, was to him a very serious matter, and her loss was not easily supplied. It came, too, at a time when other losses pained him. Lotte was married, Merck was away, and a dear friend had just died. Nevertheless, he seems to have been active in plans. Among them was most probably that of a drama on "Mahomet," which he erroneously places at a later period, after the journeys with Lavater and Basedow, but which Schäfer, very properly, restores to the year 1773, as Boie's "Annual" for 1774 contains "Mahomet's Song." Goethe has narrated in full the conception of this piece, which is very grand. He tells us the idea arose within him of illustrating the sad fact, noticeable in the biographies of genius, that every man who attempts to realise a great idea comes in contact with the lower world, and must place himself on its level in order to influence it, and thus compromise his higher aims, and finally forfeit them. He chose Mahomet as the illustration, never having regarded him as an impostor. He had carefully studied the Koran and Mahomet's life, in preparation. "The piece," he says, "opened with a hymn sung by Mahomet alone under the open sky. He first adores the innumerable stars as so many gods; but as the star god (Jupiter) rises, he offers to him, as the king of the stars, exclusive adoration. Soon after, the moon ascends the horizon, and claims the eye and heart of the worshipper, who, refreshed and strengthened by the dawning sun, is afterward stimulated to new praises. But these changes, however

delightful, are still unsatisfactory, and the mind feels that it must rise still higher, and mounts therefore to God, the One Eternal, Infinite, to whom all these splendid but finite creatures owe their existence. I composed this hymn with great delight; it is now lost, but might easily be restored as a cantata, and is adapted for music by the variety of its expression. It would, however, be necessary to imagine it sung according to the original plan, by the leader of a caravan with his family and tribe; and thus the alternation of the voices and the strength of the chorus would be secure.

"Mahomet, converted, imparts these feelings and sentiments to his friends; his wife and Ali become unconditional disciples. In the second act, he attempts to propagate this faith in the tribe; Ali still more zealously. Assent and opposition display themselves according to the variety of character. The contest begins, the strife becomes violent, and Mahomet flies. In the third act, he defeats his enemies, makes his religion the public one, and purifies the Kaaba from idols; but this being impracticable by force, he is obliged to resort to cunning. *What in his character is earthly increases and develops itself; the divine retires and is obscured.* In the fourth act, Mahomet pursues his conquests, his doctrine becomes a *means* rather than an *end*, all kinds of practices are employed, nor are horrors wanting. A woman, whose husband has been condemned by Mahomet, poisons him. In the fifth act he feels that he is poisoned. His great calmness, the return to himself and to his better nature, make him worthy of admiration. He purifies his doctrine, establishes his kingdom, and dies.

"This sketch long occupied my mind; for, according to my custom, I was obliged to let the conception perfect itself before I commenced the execution. All that genius, through character and intellect, can exer-

cise over mankind, was therein to be represented, and what it gains and loses in the process. Several of the songs to be introduced in the drama were rapidly composed; the only one remaining of them, however, is 'Mahomet's Gesang.' This was to be sung by Ali, in honour of his master, at the apex of his success, just before the change resulting from the poison."

Of all his unrealised schemes, this causes me the greatest regret. In grandeur, depth, and in the opportunities for subtle psychological unravelment of the mysteries of our nature, it was a scheme peculiarly suited to his genius. How many "Clavigos" and "Stellas" would one not have given for such a poem?

Maximiliane Laroche had recently married Brentano, a Frankfort merchant, a widower, many years her senior, with five children. Goethe became intimate at their house; and, as Merck writes, "il joue avec les enfans et accompagne le clavecin de madame avec la basse. M. Brentano, quoique assez jaloux pour un Italien, l'aime et veut absolument qu'il fréquente la maison." The husband wanted his presence, often as an umpire in the disputes with his wife; and the wife, also, chose him umpire in her disputes with her husband; nay, Merck hints, "il a la petite madame Brentano à consoler sur l'odeur de l'huile, du fromage, et des manières de son mari." So passed autumn and winter, in a tender relation, such as in those days was thought blameless enough, but such as modern writers cannot believe to have been so blameless. For my part, I cannot disbelieve his own word on this matter, when he says, "My former relation to the young wife, which was, properly speaking, only that of a brother to a sister, was resumed after marriage. Being of her own age, I was the only one in whom she heard an echo of those voices to which she had been accustomed in her youth. We lived in childish confidence; and, *although there was nothing passionate in our inter-*

course, it was painful, because she was unable to reconcile herself to her new condition." If not passionate, the relation was certainly sentimental and dangerous. Hear how he writes to Frau Jacobi: "It goes well with me, dear lady, and thanks for your double, triple letter. The last three weeks there has been nothing but excitement, and now we are as contented and happy as possible. I say *we*, for since the 15th of January not a branch of my existence has been solitary. And Fate, which I have so often vituperated, is now courteously entitled beautiful, wise Fate, for since my sister left me, this is the first gift that can be called an equivalent. The Max is still the same angel whose simple and darling qualities draw all hearts toward her, and the feeling I have for her — wherein her husband would find cause for jealousy — now makes the joy of my existence. Brentano is a worthy fellow, with a frank, strong character, and not without sense. The children are lively and good." An anecdote, related by his mother to Bettina, gives us an amusing picture of him parading before Max. The morning was bright and frosty. "Wolfgang burst into the room where his mother was seated with some friends: 'Mother, you have never seen me skate, and the weather is so beautiful to-day.' I put on my crimson fur cloak, which had a long train, and was closed in front by golden clasps, and we drove out. There skated my son, like an arrow among the groups. The wind had reddened his cheeks, and blown the powder out of his brown hair. When he saw my crimson cloak he came toward our carriage and smiled coaxingly at me. 'Well,' said I, 'what do you want?' 'Come, mother, you can't be cold in the carriage, give me your cloak.' 'You won't put it on, will you?' 'Certainly.' I took it off, he put it on, threw the train over his arm, and away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. Oh, Bettina, if you could have

seen him! Anything so beautiful is not to be seen now! I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him, as he darted out from under one arch of the bridge and in again under the other, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew! Your mother, Bettina, was on the ice, and all this was to please her."

No thought of suicide in *that* breast!

Quite in keeping with this anecdote is the spirit of the satirical farce, "Götter, Helden und Wieland," which is alluded to in this passage of a letter to Kestner, May, 1774, and must therefore have been written some time before: "My rough joke against Wieland makes more noise than I thought. He behaves very well in the matter, as I hear, so that I am in the wrong." The origin of this farce was a strong feeling in the circle of Goethe's friends, that Wieland had modernised, misrepresented, and traduced the Grecian gods and heroes. One Sunday afternoon "the rage for dramatising everything" seized him, and with a bottle of Burgundy by his side he wrote off the piece just as it stands. The friends were in raptures with it. He sent it to Lenz, then at Strasburg, who insisted on its at once being printed. After some demurring, consent was given, and at Strasburg the work saw the light. In reading it, the public, unacquainted with the circumstances and the mood to which it owed its origin, unacquainted also with the fact of its never having been designed for publication, felt somewhat scandalised at its fierceness of sarcasm. But in truth there was no malice in it. Flushed with the insolence and pride of wit, he attacked a poet whom, on the whole, he greatly loved; and Wieland took no offence at it, but reviewed it in the *Teutsche Mercur*, recommending it to all lovers of pasquinade, *persiflage*, and sarcastic wit. This reminds one of Socrates standing up in the theatre, when he was lampooned by Aris-

tophanes, that the spectators might behold the original of the sophist they were hooting on the stage. "Götter, Helden und Wieland" is really amusing, and under the mask of its buffoonery contains some sound and acute criticism.[1] The peculiarity of it, however, consists in its attacking Wieland for treating heroes unheroically, at a time when, from various parts of Germany, loud voices were raised against Wieland, as an immoral, an unchristian, nay, even an atheistical writer. Lavater called upon Christians to pray for this sinner; theologians forbade their followers to read his works; pulpits were loud against him. In 1773 the whole Klopstock school rose against him[2] in moral indignation, and burned his works on Klopstock's birthday. Very different was Goethe's ire. He saw that the gods and heroes were represented in perruques and satin breeches, that their cheeks were rouged, their thews and sinews shrunk to those of a petit-maître; and against such a conception of the old Pagan life he raised his voice.

"I cannot blame you," he writes to Kestner, "for living in the world and making acquaintances amongst men of rank and influence. Intercourse with the great is always advantageous to him who knows properly how to use it. I honour gunpowder if only for its power of bringing me a bird down out of the air. . . . So in God's name continue, and don't trouble yourself about the opinions of others, shut your heart to antagonists as to flatterers. . . . O Kestner, I am in excellent spirits, and if I have not you by my side, yet all the dear ones are ever before me. The circle of noble natures is the highest happiness I have yet achieved. And now, my dear 'Götz,' I trust in his strong nature,

[1] It called forth a retort, "Thiere, Menschen und Goethe," which has not fallen in my way. Critics speak of it as personal, but worthless.

[2] Gervinus, iv. p. 285.

he will endure. He is a human offspring with many sins, and nevertheless one of the best. Many will object to his clothing and rough angles; yet I have so much applause that it astonishes me. I don't think I shall soon write anything which will again find its public. Meanwhile I work on, in the hope that something striking in the whirl of things may be laid hold of."

On Christmas Day, 1773, in answer to Kestner's wish that he should come to Hanover and play a part there, he writes this noticeable sentence: "My father would not object to my entering foreign service, and no hope or desire of an office detains me here — but, dear Kestner, *the talents and powers which I have, I need too much for my own aims; I am accustomed to act according to my instinct, and therewith can no prince be served.*" In less than two years he was to accept service under a prince; but we shall see that he did so with full consciousness of what was required, and of what he could afford to give.

The mention of that prince leads me to make an important correction in the date of the first acquaintance with him, erroneously placed in the December of 1774 by Goethe. It is useless to inquire how Goethe's memory could have so deceived him as to bring this important event in conjunction with his first acquaintance with Lili; the dates of the Knebel correspondence are beyond question. On the 11th February, Knebel paid him a visit, and informed him that the two princes, Karl August and Constantine, were desirous of seeing him. He went, and was received with flattering kindness, especially by Karl August, who had just read "Götz." He dined with his royal hosts in a quiet way, and left them, having received and produced an agreeable impression. They were going to Mainz, whither he promised to follow them. His father, like a sturdy old burgher who held aloof from princes, shook his

skeptical head at the idea of this visit. To Mainz, however, the poet went a day or two afterward, and spent several days with the young princes, as their guest. This was his first contact with men of high rank.

In the following May he hears with joy that Lotte is a mother, and that her boy is to be called Wolfgang after him; and on the 16th of June he writes to Lotte: "I will soon send you a friend who has much resemblance to me, and hope you will receive him well; he is named Werther, and is and was — but that he must himself explain."

Whoever has followed the history thus far, moving on the secure ground of contemporary document, will see how vague and inaccurate is the account of the composition of "Werther" given by its author, in his retrospective narrative. It was not originated by growing despair at the loss of Charlotte. It was not originated by tormenting thoughts of self-destruction. It was not to free himself from suicide that he wrote this story of suicide. All these several threads were woven into its woof; but the rigour of dates forces us to the conviction that "Werther," although taken from his experience, was not written while that experience was being undergone. Indeed, the true philosophy of art would, *a priori*, lead us to the conviction that, although he cleared his "bosom of the perilous stuff" by moulding this perilous stuff into a work of art, he must have essentially outlived the storm before he painted it, — conquered his passion, and subdued the rebellious thoughts, before he made them plastic to his purpose. The poet cannot see to write when his eyes are full of tears; cannot sing when his breast is swollen with sighs, and sobs choke utterance. He must rise superior to his grief before he can sublimate his grief in song. The artist is a master, not a slave; he *wields* his passion, he is not hurried along by it; he possesses, and is not possessed. Art enshrines the great sadness

of the world, but is itself not sad. The storm of passion weeps itself away, and the heavy clouds roll off in quiet masses, to make room for the sun, which, in shining through, touches them to beauty with its rays. While pain is in its newness, it is pain and nothing else; it is not Art, but Feeling. Goethe could not write "Werther" before he had outlived Wertherism. It may have been, as he says, a "general confession," and a confession which brought him certain relief; but we do not confess until we have repented, and we do repent until we have outlived the error.

"Werther" was written rapidly. "I completely isolated myself," he says; "nay, prohibited the visits of my friends, and put aside everything that did not immediately belong to the subject. Under such circumstances, and under so many preparations in secret, I wrote it in four weeks, without any scheme of the whole, or treatment of any part, being previously put on paper." It is of this seclusion Merck writes: "Le grand succès que son drame a eu lui tourne un peu la tête. Il se détache de tous ses amis, et n'existe que dans les compositions qu'il prépare pour le public."

It is a matter of some interest to ascertain the exact truth respecting the date of the composition of "Werther." As before stated, his own account is manifestly inaccurate; and the only thing which renders it difficult to assign the date with tolerable precision, is his statement that it was written in four weeks without any scheme of the whole or treatment of any part having been previously put on paper. If we consent to believe that his memory in this case deceived him, the correspondence of the period furnishes hints from which we may conclude that in 1772, on the arrival of the news about Jerusalem's suicide, he made a general sketch, either in his mind or on paper; and that during the following year he worked at it from time to time. In June, 1773, he writes to Kestner: "And

thus I dream and ramble through life, writing plays and *novels*, and the like." In July he writes: "I am working my own situation into art for the consolation of gods and men. I know what Lotte will say when she sees it, and I know what I shall answer her." The word in the original is *Schauspiel* — play, drama; Viehoff suggests that he does not mean drama, but a work which will bring his situation *zur Schau* — before the public eye. In September of the same year, he writes: "You are always by me when I write. At present, I am working at a novel, but it gets on slowly." In November Frau Jacobi writes to him, acknowledging the receipt of a novel, in manuscript no doubt, which delights her. In February, 1774, Merck writes of him: "Je prévois qu'un roman, qui paraîtra de lui à pâques, sera aussi bien reçu que son drame." As we have nowhere a hint of any other novel, besides "Werther," at this epoch, it is difficult to resist the evidence of these dates; and we must, therefore, conclude that the assertion in the Autobiography is wholly inexact.

In September, 1774, he wrote to Lotte, sending her a copy of "Werther:" "Lotte, how dear this little book is to me thou wilt feel in reading it, and this copy is as dear to me as if it were the only one in the world. Thou must have it, Lotte; I have kissed it a hundred times; have kept it locked up that no one might touch it. O Lotte! And I beg thee let no one except Meyers see it yet; it will be published at the Leipsic fair. I wish each to read it alone; thou alone, — Kestner alone, — and each to write me a little word about it. Lotte, adieu, Lotte!"

Let us now take a glance at this work, which startled Europe, and which for a long while was all that Europe knew of Goethe.[1]

[1] Scott, in prefacing his translation of "Götz," says: "It was written by the *elegant* author of the "Sorrows of Werther."

CHAPTER V.

WERTHER.

Aujourd'hui l'homme désire immensément, mais il veut faiblement: in these words Guizot has written an epigraph for "Werther;" a book composed out of a double history, the history of its author's experience, and the history of one of his friends.

The story of Jerusalem, whom he met in the Wetzlar circle, furnished Goethe with the machinery by which to introduce his own experience. He took many of the details from Kestner's long letter, sent shortly after the catastrophe: the letter may therefore be here abridged, as an introduction to the novel. Jerusalem, melancholy, by temperament, was unhappy during the whole of his Wetzlar residence. He had been denied admittance into the high diplomatic society to which his position gave him claims; he had been in unpleasant relations with his ambassador, whose secretary he was; and he had fallen in love with the wife of his friend. Thus oppressed, he shunned company, was fond of long moonlight walks, and once lost himself in the wood, wandering about the whole night. But he was solitary, even in his grief, told none of his friends the causes of his melancholy, and solaced himself with novels — the wretched novels of that day. To these he added all the tragedies he could get hold of; English writers, especially the gloomy writers; and various philosophical works. He wrote also essays, one on suicide, a subject which

greatly occupied him. Mendelssohn's "Phædon" was his favourite work.[1] When the rumour reached Wetzlar of Goué's suicide, he said that Goué was not a fit man for such a deed, but defended the act. A few days before his own unhappy end he was talking with Schleimitz about suicide, and said, "It would be a bad look out, however, if the shot were not to take effect!" The rest of the narrative must be told in Kestner's own words, the simple circumstantial style best fitting such a history.

"Last Tuesday he comes with a discontented look to Kielmansegge, who was ill. The latter asks how he is. 'Better than I like to be.' He also that day talked a good deal about love, which he had never done before; and then about the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which had for some time pleased him more than usual. In the afternoon (Tuesday) he goes to Secretary H.'s. Until eight o'clock in the evening they play tarock together. Annchen Brandt was also there; Jerusalem accompanied her home. As they walk, Jerusalem often strikes his forehead, gloomily and repeatedly says: 'If one were but dead — if one were but in heaven!' Annchen joked him about it; he bargains for a place by her side in heaven, and at parting he says: 'It is agreed, then, that I shall have a place by you in heaven.'

"On Wednesday, as there were great doings at the 'Crown Prince,' and everybody invited everybody, he went there to dinner, though he generally dined at home, and he brought Secretary H. with him. He did not behave there otherwise than usual; if anything, he was more cheerful. After dinner, Secretary H. takes him home with him to see his wife. They take coffee; Jerusalem says to Mrs. H.: 'Dear Mrs. H., this is the last coffee I shall drink with you.' She

[1] Goethe, it will be remembered, in Strasburg, made an analysis of this work, contrasting it with Plato's.

thinks it a joke, and answers in that tone. The same afternoon (Wednesday) Jerusalem was alone at H.'s: what took place there is unknown; perhaps herein lies the cause of what followed. In the evening, just as it was dark, Jerusalem comes to Garbenheim, into the usual inn, asks whether any one is in the room above. On the answer, No, he goes up, soon comes down again, goes out into the yard, toward the left, comes back after a little while, goes into the garden; it gets quite dark; he remains there a long time, the hostess makes her remarks upon this, he comes out of the garden, goes past her with hasty steps, all without saying a word, into the yard, hurrying straight away from it.

"In the meantime, or still later, something passed between H. and his wife, concerning which H. confides to a female friend that they quarrelled a little about Jerusalem; and his wife at last desired that he would forbid him the house, whereupon he did so the following day, in a note.

"[It is said[1] that Secretary H. has given secret information that on the Wednesday before Jerusalem's death, when he was with H. and his wife taking coffee, the husband was obliged to go to the ambassador. When he returns, he observes an extraordinary seriousness in his wife, and a silence in Jerusalem, which appear strange to him, especially as he finds them so much changed after his return. Jerusalem goes away. Secretary H. makes his observations on the above-mentioned circumstances: he suspects that something injurious to him may have happened in his absence; for he is very suspicious and jealous. Nevertheless, he puts on a composed and cheerful air, and determines to put his wife to the test. He says: Jerusalem has often invited him to dinner; what does she think

[1] The passage in brackets occurs in a subsequent letter; it is inserted here to give the story continuity.

of their asking Jerusalem for once to dine with them? She, the wife, answers: No; and she must entirely break off intercourse with Jerusalem; he begins to behave in such a way that she must altogether avoid his society. And she held herself bound to tell him, her husband, what had passed in his absence. Jerusalem had thrown himself at her feet, and had wanted to make a formal declaration of love to her. She was naturally indignant at this, and had uttered many reproaches to him, etc. She now desired that her husband would forbid him, Jerusalem, the house, for she could and would neither see nor hear anything more of him.

"Hereupon, it is said, H. the next morning wrote the note to Jerusalem, etc.]

"In the night of Wednesday-Thursday he got up at two o'clock, awakened the servant, said he could not sleep, he was not well, has a fire lighted, tea made, yet is afterward, to all appearance, very well.

"Thursday morning, Secretary H. sends Jerusalem a note. The maid will not wait for an answer, and goes away. Jerusalem has just been shaved. At eleven o'clock Jerusalem sends a note to Secretary H., who does not take it from the servant, but says he requires no answer: he cannot enter into any correspondence, and besides they see each other every day at the office. When the servant brings back the note unopened, Jerusalem throws it on the table and says: Very good. (Perhaps to make the servant believe that it related to some indifferent matter.)

"In the middle of the day he dines at home, but takes little — some soup. At one o'clock he sends a note to me, and at the same time one to his ambassador, in which he begs the latter to send him his money for this (or the following) month. The servant comes to me. I am not at home, nor is my servant. Jerusalem in the meantime is gone out, comes home

about a quarter-past three, the servant gives him the note again. Jerusalem asks him why he did not leave it at my house with some maid servant? He replies, because it was open and unsealed. Jerusalem: That was of no consequence, every one might read it; he must take it again. The servant thinks himself hereby warranted to read it also, reads it, and then sends it by a boy who waits in the house. I, in the meantime, had come home; it might be half-past three when I received the following note: 'Might I beg of you to lend me your pistols for a journey which I am about to take? — J.'[1] As I knew nothing of all this that I have told you, or of his principles, having never had any particular intercourse with him, I had not the least hesitation in sending him the pistols.

"The servant had read in the note that his master intended to make a journey, and indeed the latter had himself told him so, also had ordered everything for his journey the next morning at six o'clock, even the *friseur*, without his (the servant's) knowing whither, or with whom, or in what way. But as Jerusalem always kept his engagements secret from him, this did not arouse his suspicion. Nevertheless he thought to himself: 'Is master perhaps going secretly to Brunswick, leaving me here alone?' etc. He had to take the pistols to a gunmaker's to get them loaded.

"The whole afternoon Jerusalem was busy alone; rummaged among his papers, wrote, walked, as the people below in the house heard, rapidly up and down the room. He also went out several times, and paid his small debts; he had taken a pair of ruffles, he said to the servant; they did not satisfy him, he must return them to the tradesman; if he did not like to

[1] "*Dürfe ich Ew. Wohlgeb. wohl zu einer vorhabenden Reise um Ihre Pistolen gehorsamst ersuchen?*" The German epistolary forms of civility are not translatable.

take them again, there was the money for them, whichever in fact the tradesman preferred.

"About seven o'clock the Italian master came to him. He found him restless and out of humour. He complained that he had his hypochondria again strongly, and complained about various things; said, also, that the best he could do would be to take himself out of the world. The Italian urged upon him very seriously that such passions must be repressed by philosophy, etc. Jerusalem: That is not so easily done; he would rather be alone to-day, he might leave him, etc. The Italian: He must go into society, amuse himself, etc. Jerusalem: Well, he was going out again. The Italian seeing the pistols on the table, is anxious about the result, goes away at eight o'clock, and calls on Kielmansegge, to whom he talks of nothing but Jerusalem, his restlessness and discontent, without, however, mentioning his anxiety, because he believed that he might be laughed at for it.

"The servant went to Jerusalem to take off his boots. But he said he was going out again; as he really did, before the Silberthor on the Starke Weide and elsewhere in the streets, where, with his hat pressed over his eyes, he rushed by several persons, with rapid steps, without seeing any one. He was also seen about this time standing by the river, in a position as if he meant to throw himself in (so they say).

"Before nine o'clock he comes home, says to the servant that there must be more fuel put in the stove, because he shall not go to bed yet, also tells him to get everything ready for six o'clock in the morning, and has a pint of wine brought to him. The servant, that he may be ready very early, because his master was always very punctual, goes to bed in his clothes.

"As soon as Jerusalem was alone, he seems to have prepared everything for the dreadful deed. He tore up his correspondence and threw it under the table, as

I have myself seen. He wrote two letters, one to his relations, the other to H.; it is thought also that he wrote one to the ambassador Höffler, which the latter perhaps suppresses. They lay on the writing-table. The first, which the medical man saw the next morning, contained in substance only what follows, as Doctor Held, who read it, related to me:

"'Dear father, dear mother, dear sisters and brother-in-law, forgive your unhappy son and brother; God, God bless you!'

"In the second, he entreated H. for forgiveness that he had disturbed the peace and happiness of his married life, and created dissension between this dear couple, etc. At first his inclination for H.'s wife had been only virtuous, etc. It is said to have been three sheets long, and to have ended thus: 'One o'clock. In the other life we shall see each other again.' (In all probability he shot himself immediately on finishing this letter.)"

The sensation produced in Wetzlar by this suicide was immense. People who had scarcely seen Jerusalem were unable to quiet their agitation; many could not sleep; the women especially felt the deepest interest in the fate of this unhappy youth; and "Werther" found a public ready for it.

With these materials in hand, let us take up the novel to see how Goethe employs them. Werther is a man who, not having yet learned self-mastery, imagines that his immense desires are proofs of immense superiority: one of those of whom it has been wittily said that they fancy themselves great painters because they paint with a big brush. He laughs at all rules, whether they be rules of Art, or rules which Convention builds like walls around our daily life. He hates order — in speech, in writing, in costume, in office. In a word, he hates all control. Gervinus remarks that he turns from men to children because

they do not pain him, and from them to Nature because she does not contradict him; from truth to poetry, and in poetry from the clear world of Homer to the formless world of Ossian. Very characteristic of the epoch is the boundless enthusiasm inspired by Ossian, whose rhetorical trash the Germans hailed as the finest expression of *Nature's* poetry. Old Samuel Johnson's stern, clear sense saw into the very heart of this subject when he said, "Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever if he would but *abandon* his mind to it." It is abandonment, throwing the reins on the horse's neck, which makes such writing possible; and it was precisely this abandonment to impulse, this disregard of the grave remonstrances of reason and good sense, which distinguished the Werther epoch.

Werther is not Goethe. Werther perishes because he is wretched, and is wretched because he is so weak. Goethe was "king over himself." He saw the danger, and evaded it; tore himself away from the woman he loved, instead of continuing in a dangerous position. Yet, although Werther is not Goethe, there is one part of Goethe living in Werther. This is visible in the incidents and language as well as in the character. It is the part we see reappearing under the various masks of Weislingen, Clavigo, Faust, Fernando, Edward, Meister, and Tasso, which no critic will call the same lay figure variously draped, but which every critic must see belong to one and the same genus: men of strong desires and weak volitions, wavering, impressionable natures unable to attain self-mastery. Goethe was one of those who are wavering because impressionable, but whose wavering is not weakness; they oscillate, but they return into the direct path which their wills have prescribed. He was tender as well as impressionable. He could not be stern, but he could be resolute. He had only therefore, in imagination, to keep in abeyance the native force of resolution

which gave him mastery, and under that abeyance a weak, wavering character stood before him, the original of which was himself.

When a man delineates himself, he always shrinks from a complete confession. Our moral nature has its modesty. Strong as the impulse may be to drag into light that which lies hidden in the recesses of the soul, pleased as we may be to create images of ourselves, we involuntarily keep back something, and refuse to identify ourselves with the creation. There are few things more irritating than the pretension of another to completely understand us. Hence authors never thoroughly portray themselves. Byron, utterly without self-command, is fond of heroes proud and self-sustaining. Goethe, the strongest of men, makes heroes the footballs of circumstance. But he also draws from his other half the calm, self-sustaining characters. Thus we have the antithesis of Götz and Weislingen — Albert and Werther — Carlos and Clavigo — Jarno and Meister — Antonio and Tasso — the Captain and Edward; and, deepened in colouring, Mephistopheles and Faust.

"Werther" is not much read nowadays, especially in England, where it labours under the double disadvantage of a bad name and an execrable translation. Yet it is well worth reading in the original, where it will be found very unlike the notion of it current among us. I remember many years ago reading it in the English version with astonishment and contempt; this contempt remained, until, accidentally falling in with a Spanish translation, the exquisite beauty of the pictures changed my feeling into admiration, and Goethe's own wonderful prose afterward fixed that admiration for ever. It is a masterpiece of style; we may look through German literature in vain for such clear, sunny pictures, fulness of life, and delicately managed simplicity. Its style is one continuous strain

of music, which, restrained within the limits of prose, fulfils all the conditions of poetry; dulcet as the sound of falling water, and as full of sweet melancholy as an autumnal eve.

Nothing can be simpler than the structure of this book, wherein, as M. Marmier well remarks,[1] every detail is so arranged as to lay bare the sufferings of a diseased spirit. Werther arrives at his chosen retreat, believing himself cured, and anticipating perfect happiness. He is painter and poet. The fresh spring mornings, the sweet cool evenings, soothe and strengthen him. He selects a place under the limes to read and dream away the hours. There he brings his pencil and his Homer. Everything interests him — the old woman who brings his coffee, the children who play around him, the story of a poor family. In this serene convalescence he meets with Charlotte, and a new passion agitates his soul. His simple uniform existence becomes changed. He endeavours by bodily activity to charm away his desires. The days no longer resemble each other: now ecstatic with hope, now crushed with despair. Winter comes: cold, sad, gloomy. He must away. He departs, and mingles with the world, but the world disgusts him. The monotony and emptiness of official life are intolerable to his pretensions; the parchment pride of the noblesse is insulting to his sense of superiority. He returns to the peaceful scene of his former contentment, and finds indeed Charlotte, the children, his favourite woods and walks, but not the calmness which he seeks. The hopelessness of his position overwhelms him. Disgusted with the world — unsatisfied in his cravings — he dies by his own hand.

Rosenkrantz — in the true spirit of that criticism which seeks everywhere for meanings more recondite than the author dreamt of — thinks that Goethe ex-

[1] "Études sur Goethe," p. 11.

hibits great art in making Werther a diplomatist, because a diplomatist is a man of *shams* (*Scheinthuer*); but the truth is, Goethe made him precisely what he found him. His art is truth. He is so great an artist that the simplest realities have to him significance. Charlotte cutting bread and butter for the children — the scene of the ball — the children clinging round Werther for sugar, and pictures of that kind, betray so little inventive power, that they have excited the ridicule of some English critics to whom poetry is a thing of pomp, not the beautiful vesture of reality. The beauty and art of "Werther" is not in the incidents (a Dumas would shrug despairing shoulders over such invention), but in the representation. What is Art but Representation?[1]

The effect of "Werther" was prodigious. "That nameless unrest," says Carlyle, "the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high, sad, longing discontent which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it; he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep, susceptive heart he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. 'Werther' is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing: it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice all over Europe loudly and at once respond to it. True, it prescribes no remedy; for that was a far different, far harder enterprise, to which other years and a

[1] "*L'art n'est qu'une forme*," says George Sand, with a truth few critics have penetrated; let me add Goethe's own opinion — surely of weight in such matters: "None will comprehend the simple truth that the highest, the only operation of art is form-giving" (*Gestaltung*).

higher culture were required; but even this utterance of pain, even this little, for the present is grasped at, and with eager sympathy appropriated in every bosom. If Byron's life-weariness, his moody melancholy, and mad, stormful indignation, borne on the tones of a wild and quite artless melody, could pierce so deep into many a British heart, now that the whole matter is no longer new — is indeed old and trite — we may judge with what vehement acceptance this 'Werther' must have been welcomed, coming, as it did, like a voice from the unknown regions: the first thrilling peal of that impassioned dirge which, in country after country, men's ears have listened to till they were deaf to all else. For 'Werther,' infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of literature, gave birth to a race of sentimentalists who have raged and wailed in every part of the world, till the better light dawned on them, or, at worst, exhausted nature laid herself to sleep, and it was discovered that lamenting was unproductive labour. These funereal choristers, in Germany, a loud, haggard, tumultuous, as well as tearful class, were named the *Kraftmänner*, or Powermen; but have long since, like sick children, cried themselves to rest."[1]

Perhaps there never was a fiction which so startled and enraptured the world. Men of all kinds and classes were moved by it. It was the companion of Napoleon, when in Egypt; it penetrated into China. To convey in a sentence its wondrous popularity, we may state that in Germany it became a people's book, hawked about the streets, printed on miserable paper, like an ancient ballad; and in the Chinese empire, Charlotte and Werther were modelled in porcelain.[2]

[1] "Miscellanies," vol. i. p. 272.

[2] While in Italy, he received a letter from a young Frenchman, who said: "Oui, Monsieur, je vous dois la meilleure action de ma vie, par conséquent, la racine de plusieurs autres, et pour moi votre livre est bon. Si j'avais le bonheur d'habiter le même pays

Objectors of course there were. Lessing, for example, who neither suffered from the disease of the epoch, nor tolerated any approach to sentimentality, thought so fiery a production ought to have a cold epilogue to counteract it. "Do you believe," he wrote, "that any Roman or Grecian youth would *thus* and *therefore* have committed suicide? Certainly not. They knew how to guard themselves from the extravagances of love, and in the days of Socrates such an ἐξ ἔρωτος κατοχὴ whom τι τολμᾶν παρὰ φύσιν impelled, would scarcely be pardoned even by a girl. Such little-great questionable originals only suit our Christian culture, which knows so well how to transform a cor-

que vous, j'irais vous embrasser, et vous dire mon secret; mais malheureusement j'en habite un où personne ne croirait au motif qui vient de me déterminer à cette démarche. Soyez satisfait, Monsieur, d'avoir pu à trois cents lieues de votre demeure ramener le cœur d'un jeune homme à l'honnêteté et à la vertu, toute une famille va être tranquille, et mon cœur jouit d'une bonne action."

Let me not forget the visit of his English admirer, who accosted him on the stairs with "You must be the author of 'Werther'!" adding that he could not wait a moment longer, all he wanted to say was this, "I will not repeat what you must have heard from thousands, for indeed your work has not affected me so much as it has others; but when I think what it required to write such a book, I am lost in astonishment." Having eased his mind of this weight, he wished Goethe a hearty farewell, and ran down-stairs.

A similar story is told by Schiller in a letter to Körner. "A shrivelled figure entered my room and asked me if I was not Councillor Schiller. I replied in the affirmative. 'I heard that you were here, and could not restrain myself from seeing the author of "Don Carlos."' '*Gehorsamer Diener!* your most obedient servant,' said I; 'whom have I the honour of addressing?' 'I have not the happiness of being known to you. My name is Vulpius.' 'I am indebted to you for your politeness; unluckily, I have an engagement.' 'Oh, sir, I beg you won't mention it. I am quite satisfied with having seen you.'" — *Briefwechsel*, i. p. 105.

At the risk of swelling this note to unreasonable dimensions, I must quote a passage from Pliny's "Letters," which records a similar anecdote: "Nunquamne legisti Gaditanum quemdam Titi Livii nomine gloriaque commotum ad visendum eum ab ultimo terrarum orbe venisse, statimque ut viderat abiisse?" — *Lib.* ii. *Ep.* iii.

poreal necessity into a spiritual perfection. So, worthy Goethe, let us have a concluding chapter; and the more cynical the better." [1] This is a misstatement of the whole question. It is not the extravagance of love which causes Werther's suicide: it is his own diseased moral nature which makes life insupportable, and which makes unhappy love the spark that fires the train. Moreover, one reads with surprise this reference to Greek and Roman life, coming from so admirable a scholar as Lessing. He forgot that Sophocles, in the "Antigone," makes an unhappy lover commit suicide because his mistress is lost to him. He forgot, also, that the Stoics introduced the "fashion" of suicide into Rome; and in Alexandria the Epicureans established a "society for the suppression of life" — the *συναποθανούμενοι* — where, having exhausted every pleasure, the members assembled at a feast, the wine-cup went freely round, and in the midst of this orgie they quietly put an end to their contemptible existences: — a new variation of the conversazione, at which, instead of music and æsthetic tea, the guests were invited to supper and suicide.

The Berlin Aristarchus — Nicolai — an upright, but narrow-minded man, and a great enemy of all *Schwärmerei*, wrote, by way of criticism, a parody called the "Joys of Young Werther," in which sentimentalism is ridiculed: — Werther shoots himself with chicken's blood only, and marries Charlotte, "and lives happy all the rest of his life."

Goethe's answer to this was "a burlesque poem called 'Nicolai at Werther's Grave,' which, however, cannot be communicated." This poem has been re-

[1] Lessing: "Werke," x. 225, Letter to Eschenberg.
It is surmised that Lessing's objections to "Werther" were sharpened by his dislike at recognising his young friend Jerusalem, thus brought into a fiction. A letter from Weisse to Garve, quoted by Appell, "Werther und seine Zeit," p. 50, confirms this.

covered and printed by Boas.[1] It is exceedingly coarse, and not very humourous. The admirers of "Werther," of course, are greatly incensed against Nicolai; but they forget that Nicolai never denied the talent of the work, he only echoed Lessing's objection to its tendency. His criticism, moreover, was but a feather in the scale against the praise which poured in from all sides.

While the public was reading the tragic story of "Werther" through fast-flowing tears, a painful sense of indignation rose in the breasts of Kestner and Charlotte at seeing themselves thus dragged into publicity, their story falsified. The narrative was in many respects too close to reality not to be very offensive in its *deviations* from reality. The figures were unmistakable; and yet they were not the real figures. The eager public soon found out who were the principal personages, and that a real history was at the bottom of the romance: but as the whole truth could not be known, the Kestners found themselves in a very false light. They were hurt by this indiscretion of their friend; more hurt perhaps than they chose to confess; and we may read, in the following fragment of the sketch of the letter sent by Kestner on receipt of the book, the accents of an offended friend whose pride restrains the full expression of his anger:

"Your 'Werther' might have given me great pleasure, since it could have reminded me of many interesting scenes and incidents. But as it is, it has in certain respects given me little edification. You know I like to speak my mind.

"It is true, you have woven something new into each person, or have fused several persons into one. So far good. But if in this interweaving and fusing you had taken counsel of your heart, you would not

[1] "Nachträge zu Goethe's Werke:" Lief. i. p. 12.

Portrait of Caxton
Photogravure after the painting by George Dawe

have so prostituted the real persons whose features you borrow. You wished to draw from nature, that your picture might be truthful; and yet you have combined so much that is contradictory, that you have missed the very mark at which you aimed. The distinguished author will revolt against this judgment, but I appeal to reality and truth itself when I pronounce that the artist has failed. The real Lotte would, in many instances, be grieved if she were like the Lotte you have there painted. I know well that it is said to be a character compounded of two, but the Mrs. H. whom you have partly inwoven was also incapable of what you attribute to your heroine. But this expenditure of fiction was not at all necessary to your end, to nature and truth, for it was without any such behaviour on the part of a woman — a behaviour which must ever be dishonourable even to a more than ordinary woman — that Jerusalem shot himself.

"The real Lotte, whose friend you nevertheless wish to be, is in your picture, which contains too much of her not to suggest her strongly: is, I say — but no, I will not say it, it pains me already too much only to think it. And Lotte's husband — you called him your friend, and God knows that he was so — is with her.

"The miserable creature of an Albert! In spite of its being an alleged fancy picture and not a portrait, it also has such traits of an original (only external traits, it is true, thank God, only external), that it is easy to guess the real person. And if you wanted to have him act so, need you have made him such a blockhead? that forthwith you might step forward and say, see what a fine fellow I am!"

Kestner here touches on a point of morality in literature worth consideration. While emphatically declaring that the artist must take his materials from reality, must employ his own experience, and draw

the characters he has really known, we must as emphatically declare that he is bound to represent his experience in forms sufficiently different from the reality to prevent the public reading actual histories beneath his invention, and recognising the persons he has employed as lay figures, whenever those persons are assigned parts which they would reject. There is, of course, great difficulty in keeping to truth while avoiding the betrayal of actual occurrences; but it is a difficulty which is commanded by morality.

Goethe was evidently astounded at the effect his book had produced on his friends: "I must at once write to you, my dear and angry friends, and free my heart. The thing is done; the book is out; forgive me if you can. I will hear nothing till the event has proved how exaggerated your anxiety is, and till you have more truly felt, in the book itself, the innocent mingling of fiction and truth. Thou hast, dear Kestner, exhausted everything, cut away all the ground of my excuse, and left me nothing to say; yet I know not, my heart has still more to say, although I cannot express it. I am silent, but the sweet presentiment I must still retain, and I hope eternal Fate has that in store for me which will bind us yet closer one to the other. Yes, dear ones, I who am so bound to you by love must still remain debtor to you and your children for the uncomfortable hours which my — name it as you will — has given you. . . . And now, my dear ones, when anger rises within you, think, oh, think only that your old Goethe, ever and ever, and now more than ever, is your own."

Their anger fell. They saw that he had committed an indiscretion, but had done no more. They wrote forgiveness, as we gather from this letter Goethe sent on the 21st of November:

"Here I have thy letter, Kestner! On a strange desk, in a painter's studio, for yesterday I began to

paint in oil, I have thy letter, and must give thee my thanks! Thanks, dear friend! Thou art ever the same good soul! Oh, that I could spring on thy neck, throw myself at Lotte's feet, one, one minute, and all, all that should be done away with, explained, which I could not make clear with quires of paper! O ye unbelieving ones! I could exclaim. Ye of little faith! Could you feel the thousandth part of what Werther is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon the sacrifice you have made toward it! Here is a letter, read it, and send me word quickly what thou thinkest of it, what impression it makes on thee. Thou sendest me Hennings's letter; he does not condemn me; he excuses me. Dear Brother Kestner! if you will wait, you shall be contented. I would not, to save my own life, call back Werther, and, believe me, believe in me, thy anxieties, thy *gravamina* will vanish like phantoms of the night if thou hast patience; and then, between this and a year, I promise you in the most affectionate, peculiar, fervent manner, to disperse, as if it were a mere north-wind fog and mist, whatever may remain of suspicion, misinterpretation, etc., in the gossiping public, though it is a herd of swine. Werther must — must be! You do not feel *him*, you only feel *me* and *yourselves;* and that which you call *stuck on*, and in spite of you and others, is *interwoven*. If I live, it is thee I have to thank for it; thus thou art not Albert. And thus —

"Give Lotte a warm greeting for me, and say to her: 'To know that your name is uttered by a thousand hallowed lips with reverence, is surely an equivalent for anxieties which would scarcely, apart from anything else, vex a person long in common life, where one is at the mercy of every tattler.'

"If you are generous and do not worry me, I will send you letters, cries, sighs after Werther, and if you have faith, believe that all will be well, and gossip is

nothing, and weigh well your philosopher's letter which I have kissed.

"Oh, then! — hast not felt how the man embraces thee, consoles thee, and in thy — in Lotte's worth, finds consolation enough under the wretchedness which has terrified you even in the fiction. Lotte, farewell, — Kestner, love me, and do not worry me."

The pride of the author in his darling breaks out in this letter, now his friends have forgiven him. We must admit that Kestner had reason to be annoyed; the more so as his friends, identifying him with the story, wrote sympathetically about it. He had to reply to Hennings on the subject, and in telling him the true story, begged him to correct the false reports. He says: "In the first part of 'Werther,' Werther is Goethe himself. In Lotte and Albert he has borrowed traits from us, my wife and myself. Many of the scenes are quite true, and yet partly altered; others are, at least in our history, unreal. For the sake of the second part, and in order to prepare for the death of Werther, he has introduced various things into the first part which do not at all belong to us. For example, Lotte has never either with Goethe or with any one else stood in the intimate relation which is there described; in this we have certainly great reason to be offended with him, for several accessory circumstances are too true and too well known for people not to point to us. He regrets it now, but of what use is that to us? It is true he has a great regard for my wife; but he ought to have depicted her more faithfully in this point, that she was too wise and delicate ever to let him go so far as is represented in the first part. She behaved to him in such way as to make her far dearer to me than before, if this had been possible. Moreover, our engagement was never made public, though not, it is true, kept a secret: still she was too bashful ever to confess it to any one. And there was

no engagement between us but that of hearts. It was not till shortly before my departure (when Goethe had already been a year away from Wetzlar at Frankfort, and the disguised Werther had been dead half a year) that we were married. After the lapse of a year, since our residence here, we have become father and mother. The dear boy lives still, and gives us, thank God, much joy. For the rest, there is in Werther much of Goethe's character and manner of thinking. Lotte's portrait is completely that of my wife. Albert might have been made a little more ardent. The second part of 'Werther' has nothing whatever to do with us. . . . When Goethe had printed his book, he sent us an early copy, and thought we should fall into raptures with what he had done. But we at once saw what would be the effect, and your letter confirms our fears. I wrote very angrily to him. He then for the first time saw what he had done; but the book was printed, and he hoped our fears were idle." In another letter to the same, Kestner says: "You have no idea what a man he is. But when his great fire has somewhat burnt itself out, then we shall all have the greatest joy in him."

We have thus brought to a close the history of "Werther," its composition and effect: a history so important in the biography of its author, that we might have been excused for having devoted so much space to it, even if the letters, which have furnished the evidence, did not throw so strong a light upon a period very inadequately represented in the "Wahrheit und Dichtung."

On the 28th August, 1849, the hundredth anniversary of the great poet's birth, when all Germany joined in a jubilee, a small marble monument was erected in the well-known *Wertherplatz* without the Wetzlar gates, where Goethe was wont to sit and muse; three lime-trees are planted round it, bearing this inscription:

RUHEPLATZ DES DICHTERS

GOETHE

ZU SEINEM ANDENKEN FRISCH BEPFLANZT

BEI DER JUBELFEIER AM 28. AUG. 1849.

The visitor may still see the Brunnen, also Jerusalem's grave in the quaint old cemetery, where Catholic and Protestant lie side by side. The grave has no tombstone, because of the suicide; but an old acacia marks the spot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LITERARY LION.

GOETHE was now at the perilous juncture in an author's career when, having just achieved a splendid success, he is in danger either of again snatching at laurels in presumptuous haste, or of suffering himself to repose upon the laurels he has won; talking of greatness, instead of learning to be great. Both perils he avoided. He neither traded on his renown, nor conceived that his education was complete. Wisely refraining from completing fresh important works, he kept up the practice of his art by trifles, and the education of his genius by serious studies.

Among these trifles are "Clavigo," the "Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilen," and the "Prolog zu Bahrdt's Neuesten Offenbarungen." For the composition of "Clavigo" we must retrace our steps a little, and once more see him in the Frankfort circle during 1773, that is, before the *publication* of "Werther," which was delayed till October. In his sister's pleasant circle we have already noticed Antoinette Gerock, who was fascinating enough to fix his attentions. They were accustomed to meet once a week, in picnics and pleasure parties; at one of these it was agreed to institute a marriage lottery. He thus speaks of it: "Every week lots were drawn to determine the couples who should be symbolically wedded; for it was supposed that every one knew well enough how lovers should conduct themselves, but few had any proper conceptions

of the requisite demeanour between man and wife. General rules were laid down to the effect that these wedded couples should preserve a polite indifference, not sitting near each other, nor speaking to each other too often, much less indulging in anything like caresses. At the same time, side by side with this polite indifference, this well-bred calm, anything like discord or suspicion was to be sedulously avoided; and whoever succeeded in gaining the affections of his wife without using the importunities of a lover was supposed to have achieved their ideal. Much sportive confusion and agreeable pleasantry of course arose from this scheme." Strangely enough, to him it fell thrice to have the same girl appointed by hazard to fill the place of his wife. When fate had brought them together for the third time, it was resolved unanimously that they should be no longer separated, that Heaven had spoken, and that hereafter they were to consider themselves as man and wife, and not to draw lots as the others did. At these *réunions* something new was generally read aloud by one of the party. One evening Goethe brought with him as a novelty the "Mémoire" of Beaumarchais. During the conversation which ensued, Goethe's partner said to him: "If I were thy liege lady, and not thy wife, I would command thee to change this memoir into a play, to which it seems well suited." He answered: "That thou mayst see, my love, that liege lady and wife are one, I here undertake that this day week I will read a play on this very matter." So bold a promise excited astonishment, but he resolved on fulfilling it. "What, in such cases," he says, "is termed invention, was with me spontaneous. While escorting my titulary wife home I was silent; and on her inquiring the cause I told her that I was thinking out the play, and had already got into the middle of it — intending to show her how gladly I would do anything to please her. Upon which she pressed my hand, and I snatched

a kiss. 'Thou must not step out of thy character,' she exclaimed; 'they say it is not proper for married folks to be loving.' 'Let them say what they please,' I replied, 'we will have it our own way.'"

He confesses that before reading the memoir aloud, the subject had appeared to him eminently dramatic; though, without such a stimulus as he had received, this piece, like so many others, would have remained among the number of *possible* creations. The only novelty in it was his mode of treating the villain. He was weary of those characters so frequently represented, who, from revenge, or from hate, or from trivial motives, ruin a noble nature; and he wished in Carlos to show the working of clear good sense, against passion and inclination. Justified by the precedent of Shakespeare, he translated, word for word, such portions of the memoir as were dramatic; borrowing the dénouement from an English ballad.[1] He was ready before the week expired, and read the piece to a delighted audience. This is his own account. That it is inexact has been pointed out by Gödeke, who remarks that the letter to Kestner proves the incident of lot-drawing to have occurred in 1773; whereas Beaumarchais's "Mémoire" did not appear till the beginning of 1774.

A few words on this memoir may be useful. Beaumarchais had two sisters living in Madrid, one married to an architect, the other, Marie, engaged to Clavijo, a young author without fortune. No sooner had Clavijo obtained the office he had long solicited, than he refused to fulfil his promise. Beaumarchais hurried to Madrid; his object was twofold: to save the reputation of his sister, and to put a little speculation of his own on foot. He sought Clavijo, and by his sang-

[1] So he says; but his memory deceived him. The ballad was an old German ballad, "Das Lied von Herrn und der Magd." See Herder's "Nachlass," i. 159.

froid and courage extorted from him a written avowal of his contemptible conduct. No sooner is this settled, than Clavijo, alarmed at the consequences, solicits a reconciliation with Marie, offering to marry her. Beaumarchais consents, but just as the marriage is about to take place, he learns that Clavijo is secretly conspiring against him, accusing him of having extorted the marriage by force, in consequence of which he has procured an order from the government to expel Beaumarchais from Madrid. Irritated at such villainy, Beaumarchais goes to the ministers, reaches the king, and avenges himself by getting Clavijo dismissed from his post. This is, in brief, the substance of the "Mémoire" which appeared in February, 1774. The adventure occurred in 1764, so that Clavijo, who subsequently became a distinguished writer, might have seen himself not only held up to odium in the sparkling pages of Beaumarchais, but represented on the stage of every German theatre. He died in 1806, vice-president of the Natural History Society in Madrid, having previously translated Buffon, and edited the *Mercurio historico y politico de Madrid.* We must suppose that Goethe knew nothing of the existence of Clavijo when he wrote the drama.

With Beaumarchais in our hands it is curious to read "Clavigo," which is as close a reproduction as the dramatic form admits; and is an evidence that Goethe did wisely in not at once proceèding to complete "Faust" (fragments of which were written) or "Cæsar." He would infallibly have repeated himself. He has repeated himself in "Clavigo:" the external circumstances are changed, but the experience is the same. Clavigo is another Weislingen, and was meant to be so: "I have written a tragedy," Goethe writes to Schönborn, "'Clavigo,' a modern anecdote, dramatised with the greatest simplicity and heartfelt truth. My hero is an irresolute, half-great, half-little man, the

pendant to Weislingen, or rather Weislingen himself as the chief person." He has well portrayed the weak, ambitious nature of one who hopes to rise still higher in the world, but feels his career obstructed by a passion which made him happy in the obscure days of penniless youth. The popular author and court favourite aspires to some woman of rank; an aspiration in which he is encouraged by his friend Carlos, who mockingly strips off the garlands with which the poet's imagination had decked his mistress.

Marie is a weak, sensitive creature, without much individuality, and is perhaps the poorest sketch Goethe has given of a woman. There is, however, one little touch which shows the poet; it is a sentence which escapes Marie, when Clavigo turns repentant to her feet, appealing to her affection: she throws herself on his neck, exclaiming, "Ah, sister, whence knows he that I love him so — *woher weiss er dass ich ihn so liebe?*"

Marie is overjoyed at Clavigo's return, but her joy is brief. The demon of ambition, aided by the cold sarcasms of Carlos (in whom we see the germ of Mephistopheles), once more troubles Clavigo, and turns him from a marriage so ill suited to his hopes. Carlos bitterly, but truly, says to him, "There is nothing in the world so pitiable as an undecided man, who wavers between two feelings, hoping to reconcile them." He suggests that Beaumarchais should be assassinated. "He who orders the assassination of the brother, pantomimically intimates that he will have nothing to do with the sister," adds Carlos, quite in the Mephistophelic tone. They determine on a contemptible plan. Beaumarchais is to be imprisoned for having insulted and threatened Clavigo under his own roof. The order for arrest arrives, and Marie dies broken-hearted at the treachery of her lover.

Up to this point — short at least of the death of Marie — Beaumarchais's "Mémoire" has been faith-

fully followed; a fifth act is added, with a dénouement to fit it for the stage.

Powerful as this scene is in theatrical effect, one cannot but admit that æsthetically it is poor and almost commonplace. The clumsiness by which the meeting is contrived has been noticed by Rosenkranz.[1] Clavigo is seeking Carlos; he orders the servant who lights the way, *not* to pass through the street where the Beaumarchais family resides, yet the servant actually leads him there because it is the shorter route. The whole tone of this fifth act is not in harmony with what precedes. The act is *grafted on* — it does not *grow out of* — the subject.

As a stage play the interest is great: the situations are effective; the dramatic collision perfect; the plot is clearly and rapidly evolved; the language vigorous, passionate, and pointed. But it must not be tried by any high standard. Merck, anxious about his friend's reputation, would not consent to judge the play according to the theatre standard, but exclaimed, "Such trash as this you must not write again; others can do that!" Goethe says, that in this Merck was wrong, and for the first time did him an injury. "We should not in all things transcend the notions which men have already formed; it is right that much should be done in accordance with the common way of thinking. Had I written a dozen such pieces (and it would have been easy to do so with a little stimulus) three or four of them would perhaps have kept their place upon the stage."

This can scarcely be accepted as conclusive reasoning. Merck might have replied, "Perhaps so; but you have genius fit for higher things than stage plays." Nevertheless, as before hinted, I think Goethe was right in his course, although the reasons he alleges are unsatisfactory. "Clavigo," like the other trifles he composed at this period, must be regarded as the

[1] "Goethe und Seine Werke," p. 185.

sketches with which an artist fills his portfolio, not the works which are to brighten galleries. The impulse to create was imperious; if trifles were demanded, he created trifles. His immense activity was forced to expend itself on minor works, because he dimly felt himself unripe for greater works.

He was beginning to feel himself a man of consequence; the notable men of the day eagerly sought his acquaintance. Among these men we must note Klopstock, Lavater, Basedow, Jacobi, and the Stolbergs. Correspondence led to personal intercourse. Klopstock arrived in Frankfort in this October, 1774, just before "Werther" appeared. Goethe saw him, read the fragments of "Faust" to him, and discussed skating with him. But the great religious poet was too far removed from the strivings of his young rival to conceive that attachment for him which he felt for men like the Stolbergs, or to inspire Goethe with any keen sympathy.

In June, Lavater also came to Frankfort. This was a few months before Klopstock's visit. He had commenced a correspondence with Goethe on the occasion of the "Briefe des Pastors." Those were great days of correspondence. Letters were written to be read in circles, and were shown about like the last new poem, Lavater pestered his friends for their portraits, and for ideal portraits (according to their conception) of our Saviour, all of which were destined for the work on "Physiognomy" on which he was then engaged. The artist who took Goethe's portrait sent Lavater the portrait of Bahrdt instead, to see what he would make of it; the physiognomist was not taken in; he stoutly denied the possibility of such a resemblance. Yet when he saw the actual Goethe he was not satisfied. He gazed in astonishment, exclaiming "*Bist's?* Art thou he?" "*Ich bin's.* I am he," was the answer; and the two embraced each other. Still the physiognomist was

dissatisfied. "I answered him with my native and acquired realism, that, as God had willed to make me what I was, he, Lavater, must even so accept me."

The first surprise over, they began to converse on the weightiest topics. Their sympathy was much greater than appears in Goethe's narrative, written many years after the characters of both had developed themselves; Goethe's into what we shall subsequently see; Lavater's into that superstitious dogmatism and priestly sophistication which exasperated and alienated many of his friends.

Lavater forms a curious figure in the history of those days: a compound of the intolerant priest and the factitious sentimentalist. He had fine talents and a streak of genius, but he was ruined by vanity. In his autobiographic sketch[1] he has represented himself indicating as a child the part he was to play as a man. Like many other children, he formed for himself a peculiar and intimate relation with God, which made him look upon his playfellows with scorn and pity, because they did not share his "need and use of God." He prayed for wonders, and the wonders came. God corrected his school exercises. God concealed his many faults, and brought to light his virtuous deeds. In fact, Lavater was said to have been "from the beginning the friend of Lies, who stooped to the basest flatteries to gain influence." To this flattering, cringing softness he united the spirit of priestly domination. His first works made a great sensation. In 1769 he translated Bonnet's "Palingénésie," adding notes in a strain of religious sentimentalism then very acceptable. At a time when the critics were rehabilitating Homer and the early singers, it was natural that the religious world should attempt a restoration of the early Apostolic spirit. At a time when belief in poetic inspiration was a first article of the creed, belief in prophetic

[1] See Gessner's "Biographie Lavaters."

inspiration found eager followers. I have already touched on the sentimental extravagance of the time. The lovely Countess Branconi writes to him: "O toi, chéri pour la vie, l'âme de mon âme! Ton mouchoir, tes cheveux, sont pour moi ce que mes jarretières sont pour toi!" etc., which is surpassed by what he allowed to be addressed to him by another admirer: "Oh, that I could lie on thy breast in Sabbath holy evening stillness — oh, thou angel!" This kind of rhodomontade went all round. They wept, and were wept on.

At the time of his arrival in Frankfort, Lavater was in the first flush of renown. Goethe was peculiarly attracted to him, not only by the singularity of his character, but by a certain community of religious *sentiment*. Community of creed there was not, and could not be. What Goethe *felt* we may gather from his attachment to Fräulein von Klettenberg; what he *thought* may be seen in such letters as this to Pfenninger, a friend of Lavater's: "Believe me, dear brother, the time will come when we shall understand each other. You talk to me as a skeptic who wishes to *understand* — to have all *demonstrated* — who has had no experience. The contrary of all this is the fact. Am I not more resigned in matters of Understanding and Demonstration than you are? I am, perhaps, a fool to express myself in your language to please you. I ought, by a purely experimental psychology, to place my inmost being before you to show that I am a man, and hence can only feel as other men feel, and that all which appears contradiction between us is only dispute about words, arising from my inability to feel things under other combinations than those actually felt by me, and hence, in expressing their relation to me, I name them differently, which has been the eternal source of controversy, and will for ever remain so. And yet you always want to oppress me with *evidences*. Wherefore? Do I need evidence of my own existence?

Evidence that I feel? I only treasure love, and demand evidences which convince me that thousands (or even one) have felt before me that which strengthens and invigorates me. And thus to me the word of man becomes like unto the word of God. With my whole soul, I throw myself upon the neck of my brother: Moses, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, Spinoza, or Machiavelli! To each, however, I would say: Dear friend, it is with you as it is with me. Certain details you apprehend clearly and powerfully, but the whole can no more be conceived by you than by me."

He names Spinoza in this very remarkable passage; and the whole letter seems like a reproduction of the passage in the "Ethics," where that great thinker, anticipating modern psychology, shows "that each person judges of things according to the disposition of his brain, or rather accepts the affections of his imagination as real things. It is no wonder therefore (as we may note in passing) that so many controversies have arisen among men, and that these controversies have at last given birth to skepticism. For although human bodies are alike in many things, there are more in which they differ, and thus what to one appears good, to another appears evil; what to one appears order, to another appears confusion; what to one is pleasant, to another is unpleasant."[1]

It is unnecessary to interrupt the narrative here by more closely scrutinising his studies of Spinoza; enough if the foregoing citation has made present to

[1] "Quæ omnia satis ostendunt, unumquemque *pro dispositione cerebri de rebus judicasse*, vel potius imaginationis affectiones pro rebus accepisse. Quare non mirum est (ut hoc etiam obiter notemus) quod inter homines tot, quot experimur, controversiæ ortæ sint ex quibus tandem Scepticismus. Nam quamvis humana corpora in multus conveniunt, in plurimis tamen discrepant, et ideo id quod uni bonum alteri malum videtur; quod uni ordinatum, alteri confusum; quod uni gratum, alteri ingratum est." — *Ethices: Pars* i. *Append.*

our minds the probable parentage of Goethe's opinions. The contrast between Lavater's Christianity and the Christianity of Fräulein von Klettenberg interested him, and gave him matter for thought. He agreed somewhat with both, but he agreed perfectly with neither. The difference between Faith and Knowledge he thus reconciled: "In Faith everything depends on the fact of believing; *what* we believe is quite secondary. Faith is a profound sense of security, springing from confidence in the All-powerful, Inscrutable Being. The strength of this confidence is the main point. But *what* we think of this Being depends on other faculties, or even on other circumstances, and is altogether indifferent. Faith is a holy vessel, into which every man may pour his feelings, his understanding, and his imagination, as entirely as he can. Knowledge is the antipode of faith. Therein the point is not *whether* we know, but *what* we know, *how much* we know, and *how well* we know it. Hence men may dispute about knowledge, because it can be widened, corrected; but not about Faith."

So strong was the attraction of Lavater's society, that Goethe accompanied him to Ems. The journey was charming; beautiful summer weather, and Lavater's cheerful gaiety formed pleasant accompaniments to their religious discussions. On returning to Frankfort, another and very different celebrity was there to distract his attention — Basedow, the education reformer. No greater contrast to Lavater could have been picked out of the celebrities of that day. Lavater was handsome, clean, cheerful, flattering, insinuating, devout; Basedow ugly, dirty among the dirty, sarcastic, domineering, and aggressively heterodox. One tried to restore Apostolic Christianity; the other could not restrain the most insolent sarcasms on the Bible, the Trinity, and every form of Christian creed. One set up as a Prophet, the other as a Pedagogue.

Basedow (born 1723) was early in indicating his future part. At school the wild and dirty boy manifested rebellious energy against all system and all method; studied in a desultory, omnivorous manner, as if to fit himself for everything; ran away from home, and became a lackey in a nobleman's house; caught up Rousseau's doctrine about a state of nature, which he applied to Education; wrote endless works, or rather incessant repetitions of one work; shouted with such lusty lungs that men could not but hear him; appealed to the nation for support in his philanthropic schemes; collected "a rent" from philanthropists and dupes; attacked established institutions, and parenthetically all Christian tenets; and proved himself a man of restless energy, and of vast and comprehensive ignorance. He made considerable noise in the world; and in private lived somewhat the life of a restless hog who has taken to philanthropy and freethinking.

Much as such a character was opposed to his own, Goethe, eager and inquiring, felt an attraction toward it, as toward a character to study. Like many other studies, this had its drawbacks. He was forced to endure the incessant smoking, and incessant sarcasms of the dirty educationist. The stench he endured with firmness; the anti-Christian tirades he answered with paradoxes wilder than any he opposed. "Such a splendid opportunity of exercising, if not of elevating, my mind," he says, "was not to be thrown away; so, prevailing on my father and friends to undertake my law business, I once more set off for the Rhine in Basedow's company." Basedow filled the carriage with smoke, and killed the time with discussions. On the way they fell in with Lavater, and the three visited several châteaux, especially those of noble ladies, everywhere anxious to receive the literary Lions. Goethe, we may parenthetically note, is in error when he says that he was on this voyage greatly pestered by the women

wanting to know all about the truth of "Werther;" the fact being that "Werther" did not appear until the following October; for although the exigencies of my narrative have caused a certain anticipation in chronology, this journey with Lavater and Basedow, here made to follow the publication of "Werther," came *before* it in Goethe's life. If we are not to believe that the women crowded round him with questions about Lotte, we can readily believe that children crowded round him, begging him to tell them stories.

Wild and "genius-like" was his demeanour. "Basedow and I," he says, "seemed to be ambitious of proving who could behave the most outrageously." Very characteristic is the glimpse we catch of him quitting the ballroom, after a heating dance, and rushing up to Basedow's room. The Philanthropist did not go to bed. He threw himself in his clothes upon the bed, and there, in a room full of tobacco smoke and bad air, dictated to his scribe. When fatigue overcame him, he slept awhile, his scribe remaining there, pen in hand, awaiting the awakening of the Philanthropist, who, on opening his eyes, at once resumed the flow of his dictation. Into such a room sprang the dance-heated youth, began a fierce discussion on some problem previously mooted between them, hurried off again to look into the eyes of some charming partner, and before the door closed heard Basedow recommence dictating.

This union of philosophy with amusement, of restless theorising with animal spirits, indicates the tone of his mind. "I am contented," he said to Lavater, "I am happy. That I feel; and yet the whole centre of my joy is an overflowing yearning toward something which I have not, something which my soul perceives dimly." He could reach that "something" neither through the pious preaching of Lavater, nor through the aggressive preaching of Basedow. Very graphic and ludicrous is the picture he gives of his sitting like a citizen of the

world between a prophet on the right and a prophet on the left hand —

> "Prophete rechts, Prophete links,
> Das Welt-Kind in der Mitten" —

quietly eating a chicken while Lavater explains to a country parson the mystery of the Revelations, and Basedow astonishes a dancing-master with a scornful exposure of the inutility of baptism.[1]

Nor could he find this "something" in Jacobi, with whom he now came into sentimental intimacy. He could to some extent sympathise with Jacobi's sentimental cravings and philosophic, religious aspirations, for he was bitten with the Wertherism of the epoch. He could gaze with him in uneasy ecstasy upon the moonlight quivering on the silent Rhine, and pour forth the songs which were murmuring within his breast. He could form a friendship, believing it to rest upon an eternal basis of perfect sympathy; but the inward goad which drove him onwards and onwards, was not to be eradicated until fresh experience had brought about fresh metamorphoses in his development. It is the Youth we have before us here, the Youth in his struggles and many wandering aims, not the Man grown into clearness.

Jacobi thought that in Goethe he had at length found the man his heart needed, whose influence could sustain and direct him. "The more I consider it," he wrote to Wieland, "the more intensely do I feel how impossible it is for one who has not seen and heard Goethe to write a word about this extraordinary creation of God's. One needs to be with him but an hour to see that it is utterly absurd to expect him to think and act otherwise than as he does. I do not mean that there is no possibility of an improvement in him; but nothing else is possible with his nature, which devel-

[1] See the poem "Diné zu Coblentz."

ops itself as the flower does, as the seed ripens, as the tree grows into the air and crowns itself."

Goethe's wonderful *personality* seems almost everywhere to produce a similar impression. Heinse, the author of "Ardinghello," writes of him at this period to Gleim: "Goethe was with us, a beautiful youth of five and twenty, who is all genius and strength from head to foot, his heart full of feeling, his soul full of fire and eagle-winged; I know no man in the whole History of Literature who at such an age can be compared to him in fulness and completeness of genius." Those, and they are the mass, who think of him as the calm and stately minister, the old Jupiter throned in Weimar, will feel some difficulty perhaps in recognising the young Apollo of this period. But it must be remembered that not only was he young, impetuous, bursting into life, and trying his eagle wings with wanton confidence of strength; he was, moreover, a Rhinelander, with the gay blood of that race, stimulated by the light and generous wine of the Rhine — not a Northern muddled with beer. When I contrast young Goethe with a Herder, for example, it is always as if a flask of Rhenish glittered beside a seidel of Bavarian beer.

Such answer to his aspirations as the youth could at this period receive, he found in Spinoza. In his father's library there was a little book written against Spinoza, one of the many foolish refutations which that grand old Hebrew's misunderstood system called forth. "It made little impression on me, for I hated controversies, and always wanted to know *what* a thinker thought, and not what another conceived he *ought to have thought*." It made him, however, once more read the article Spinoza, in "Bayle's Dictionary," which he found pitiable — as indeed it is. If a philosophy is to be judged by its fruits, the philosophy which guided so great and so virtuous a life as that of Spinoza could

not, Goethe thought, deserve the howls of execration which followed Spinozism. He procured the "Opera Posthuma" and studied them; with what fruit let the following confession indicate. He is speaking of his new friendship with Jacobi: "The thoughts which Jacobi imparted to me flowed immediately from his heart. How deeply was I moved when in unlimited confidence he revealed to me the deepest wants and aspirations of his soul. From so amazing a combination of mental wants, passion, and ideas, I could only gather presentiment of what might, perhaps, hereafter grow clearer to me. Fortunately, my mind had already been prepared, if not thoroughly cultivated in this direction, having in some degree appropriated the results and style of thought of an extraordinary man, and though my study had been incomplete and hasty, I was yet already conscious of important influences derived from this source. This man, who had wrought so powerfully on me, and who was destined to affect so deeply my entire mode of thinking, was Spinoza. After looking around the world in vain for the means of developing my strange nature, I met with the 'Ethics' of that philosopher. Of what I read *in* the work, and of what I read *into* it, I can give no account, but I found in it a sedative for my passions, and it seemed to unveil a clear, broad view over the material and moral world. But what especially riveted me to him, was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth in every sentence. That wonderful sentiment, '*He who truly loves God must not require God to love him in return,*' together with all the preliminary propositions on which it rests, and all the consequences deduced from it, filled my mind.[1] To be disinterested in everything, but most of all in love and friendship,

[1] The proposition to which Goethe refers is doubtless the xix. of Book v.: "*Qui Deum amat, conari non potest, ut Deus ipsum contra amet.*"

was my highest desire, my maxim, my practice, so that that saucy speech of *Philine's*, 'If I love thee, what is that to thee?' was spoken right out of my heart. Moreover, it must not be forgotten here that the closest unions rest on contrasts. The all-equalising calmness of Spinoza was in striking contrast with my all-disturbing activity; his mathematical method was the direct opposite of my poetic style of thought and feeling, and that very precision which was thought ill adapted to moral subjects made me his enthusiastic disciple, his most decided worshipper. Mind and heart, understanding and sense, sought each other with eager affinity, binding together the most different natures. But now all within was fermenting and seething in action and reaction. Fritz Jacobi, the first whom I suffered to look into the chaos, and whose nature was also toiling in its own unfathomable depths, heartily responded to my confidence, and endeavoured to convert me to his own opinions. He, too, felt an unspeakable spiritual want; he, too, would not have it appeased by *outward* aid, but aimed at development and illumination from *within*. I could not comprehend what he communicated to me of the state of his mind; the less, indeed, as I could form no adequate conception of my own. Still, being far in advance of me in philosophical thought, and even in the study of Spinoza, he was able to guide and enlighten my efforts."

Although he studied Spinoza much and reverently, he never studied him systematically. The mathematical form into which that thinker casts his granite blocks of thought, was an almost insuperable hindrance to systematic study on the part of one so impatient, so desultory, and so unmathematical as Goethe. But a study may be very fruitful which is by no means systematic; a phrase may fructify, when falling on a proper soil. It has doubtless happened to the reader in his youth to meet with some entirely novel and

profoundly suggestive idea, casually cited from an ancient author; if so, he will remember the overmastering influence it exercised, the longing it awakened for a nearer acquaintance with that author. The casual citation of a passage from Spinoza made my youth restless, and to this day I remember the aspect of the page where it appeared, and the revolution in thought which it effected. A few ideas determined the direction of Goethe's mind. Although he did not study the system of Spinoza with any view of adopting it as a system, he studied it to draw therefrom food which his own mind could assimilate and work into new forms. Spinoza was to him what Kant was to Schiller; but with characteristic difference, Schiller studied systematically, and tried systematically to reproduce what he had studied.

Side by side with Spinozism, we have to note his struggles to gain clearness respecting Christianity. The influence of Fräulein von Klettenberg attracted him to the Moravians, who seemed to realise early Christianity; with his usual impressionability he studied their history and their doctrines, and gave them some hopes that he would become a convert; but his enthusiasm cooled down when he discovered the wide chasm that separated him from them. "That which separated me from this brotherhood," he says, "as well as from many other worthy Christians, was the very point which has more than once torn the Church with dissent. One party maintained that by the Fall human nature had been so corrupted to its inmost core that not a trace of good could be found in it; and that, therefore, man must renounce all trust in his own powers, and look only to the effect of grace. The opposite party, admitting the hereditary imperfections of man, ascribed to nature a certain internal germ of good which, animated by divine grace, was capable of growing up into a joyous tree of spiritual happiness. This

latter conviction penetrated to the depths of my soul all the time that I was, with tongue and pen, maintaining the opposite doctrine. But I had so dawdled along without thinking (*ich dämmerte so hin*) that I had never clearly stated the dilemma to myself."

In spite of all his differences, however, with this sect or that sect, nothing, as he says, could rob him of his love for the Holy Scriptures and for the Founder of Christianity. He therefore wrought out for his own private use a Christianity of his own; and as everything which took possession of his soul always assumed a poetic form, he now conceived the idea of treating epically the history of the "Wandering Jew." "The legend ran that in Jerusalem there was a shoemaker named Ahazuerus. The shoemaker whom I had known in Dresden supplied me with the main features of his character; and I animated them with the spirit and humour of an artisan of the school of Hans Sachs, ennobling him by a great love for Christ. In his open workshop he talked with the passers-by, and jested with them after the Socratic fashion; so that the people took pleasure in lingering at his booth. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees spoke to him; and our Saviour himself, and his disciples, often stopped before his door. The shoemaker, whose thoughts were altogether worldly, I nevertheless depicted as feeling a special affection for our Lord, which chiefly showed itself in a desire to convert this great man, whose mind he did not comprehend, to his own way of thinking. He therefore gravely incited Christ to abandon contemplation, to cease wandering through the country with such idlers, and drawing the people away from their work into the desert; because an assembled multitude, he said, was always excitable, and no good would come of such a life. Our Lord endeavoured by parables to instruct him in his higher views, but they were all thrown away on the rough shoemaker. As

Christ grew into greater importance, and became a public character, the well-meaning workman pronounced his opinion still more sharply and angrily, declaring that nothing but disorder and tumult could result from such proceedings, and that Christ would at length be compelled to place himself at the head of a party, which certainly was not his design. And now when these consequences had ensued, Christ having been seized and condemned, Ahazuerus gives full vent to his indignation, as Judas, who in appearance had betrayed our Lord, enters the workshop in despair, with loud lamentations, telling of the frustration of his plan. He had been, no less than the shrewdest of the other disciples, thoroughly persuaded that Christ would declare himself Regent and Chief of the people, and thought by this violence to compel him, whose hesitation had hitherto been invincible, to hasten the declaration.[1] In this persuasion he had roused the priesthood to an act from which they had hitherto shrunk. The disciples, on their side, were not unarmed; and probably all would have gone well, had not our Lord given himself up, and left them in the most helpless condition. Ahazuerus, by no means propitiated by this narrative, embitters the state of the wretched ex-apostle, who has no resource left but to hang himself. As our Saviour is led past the workshop of the shoemaker, on his road to execution, the well-known scene of the legend occurs. The sufferer faints under the burden of the cross, which Simon of Cyrene undertakes to carry. At this moment Ahazuerus steps forward; and, in the style of those harsh common-sense people who, seeing a man miserable through his own fault, feel no com-

[1] This new light thrown upon that strange history, though adverse from all tradition, is in strict accordance with our knowledge of human nature. It has been adopted by Archbishop Whately, to whom, indeed, it is generally attributed; and has furnished the subject of a miracle-play to R. H. Horne. See his "Judas Iscariot."

passion, but rather, in their ill-timed justice, make the matter worse by reproaches, repeats all his former warnings, which he now turns into vehement accusations, springing, as it were, from his very love for the sufferer. Our Saviour answers not, but at that instant Veronica covers his face with a napkin, and there, as she removes it and raises it aloft, Ahazuerus sees depicted the features of our Lord, not in their present agony, but radiant with celestial life. Astounded at the sight, he turns away his eyes, and hears the words, 'Over the earth shalt thou wander till thou shalt once more see me in this form.' Overwhelmed by the sentence, he is some time before he recovers himself; *he then finds that every one has gone to the place of execution, and that the streets of Jerusalem are empty.* Unrest and yearnings drive him forth, and his wanderings begin."

This legendary conception he never executed. It lived within him for a long while, and during his travels in Italy he again thought of taking it up; but like so many other plans, it remained a mere scheme, from the want of some external stimulus urging him to give it a shape.

Another subject also worthy of elaborate treatment is thus mentioned by him: "The common burthen of humanity which we have all to bear falls most heavily on those whose intellectual powers expand early. We may grow up under the protection of parents, we may lean for awhile upon our brothers and friends, be amused by acquaintances, rendered happy by those we love, but in the end man is always driven back upon himself; and it seems as if the Divinity had so placed himself in relation to man as not always to respond to his reverence, trust, and love, at least not in the terrible moment of need. Early and often enough had I learned that the call to us is 'Physician, heal thyself;' and how frequently had I been compelled to exclaim

in my pain, 'I tread the wine-press alone!' So now, looking round for support to my self-dependence, I felt that the surest basis on which to build was my own productive activity. For many years I had never known it fail me. What I had seen by day often shaped itself into magnificent dreams at night. My time for writing was early in the morning; but in the evening, or deep in the night, when wine and social intercourse had elevated my spirits, you might demand whatever you wanted; only let a subject with some character in it be proposed, and I was at once prepared and ready. In reflecting on this natural gift, I saw that it belonged to me *as my own*, and could neither be fostered nor hindered by any external circumstances; so I sought to make it the basis of my whole existence. This notion transformed itself into an image. The old mythological figure of Prometheus occurred to me; who, severed from the gods, peopled the world from his own workshop. I clearly felt that nothing important could be produced without self-isolation. My productions had been the children of solitude; and since I had formed wider relations with the world there had been no want of power or of *pleasure of invention*, but the *execution* halted, because I had neither in prose nor in verse what could properly be called a style of my own, and thus with every new work had to begin at the beginning, and make experiments. As in this I had to exclude all aid from men, so, after the fashion of Prometheus, I separated myself from the gods also; and this the more naturally as, with my mode of thinking, one tendency always swallowed up and repelled every other.

"The fable of Prometheus lived within me. The old Titan web I cut up according to my own stature, and began to write a play expressing the incongruous relation in which Prometheus stood with respect to Jupiter and the later gods, in consequence of his

making men with his own hand, giving them life by the aid of Minerva, and thus founding a third dynasty. To this strange composition belongs the monologue which has become famous in German literature, because it called forth a declaration from Lessing against Jacobi on certain important matters of doctrine."[1]

Of this "Prometheus" we possess but a fragment, but the fragment is of such excellence as to make us regret that it never was completed. It lies there among his works, like the torso of the Theseus, enough to prove the greatness of the artist, if not enough to satisfy the spectator. Grand in conception, simple in style, luminous with great thoughts, it would have been an exemplar of the adaptation of an antique symbol to modern meanings, not the idle imitation of a bygone creed.

Nothing can be more unlike Æschylus. The Greek Titan glories in his audacity:

"Ἑκὼν, ἑκὼν ἥμαρτον, οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι."

"Willingly, willingly I did it, never will I deny the deed!" but, while glorying, he *complains:* the injustice of the tyrant wrings from him cries of pain, cries of physical and cries of moral agony. The whole tragedy is one wild outburst of sorrow. The first words he utters fling his clamorous sorrow on the air, call on the Divine Ether and the swift-winged Winds, on the Sea Springs and the multitudinous laughter of the waves, on the Universal Mother, the Earth — and on the all-seeing Eye, the Sun, to witness what he, a god, must suffer. These are his opening words; the closing words carry the same burden. He wails over the pangs that are and are to be:

[1] He alludes to the discussion on Spinoza between Jacobi and Lessing, which gave rise to Jacobi's book, "Ueber die Lehre des Spinozas." This feeble book made a great noise in its day.

"Αἰ, αἰ τὸ παρὸν τὸ τ' ἐπερχόμενον
Πῆμα στενάχω."

This is antique. The Titan in Goethe utters *no* complaint. There is no bravado in his defiance; the defiance is uncompromising and sublime. His contempt for Zeus is founded on his knowledge of the subordination of Zeus to a higher power — Destiny. "Away," he exclaims, "I serve no slave."

"Geh! Ich diene nicht Vasallen!"

In this he resembles the Titan drawn by Shelley, in the "Prometheus Unbound," who, to Mercury's warning of the years of coming torture, calmly and grandly answers:

"'Perchance no thought can count them — yet they pass!'"

On this conviction rests his self-reliance. He knows the reign of tyranny must end, and he awaits that end.

In Æschylus, also, the Titan knows that Zeus must fall; he foresees his own release, and foreseeing it, resolves to bear his fate as well as he can, "for it is vain to struggle against fate" (v. 105). Nevertheless, the knowledge of an end, and the philosophy which preaches acquiescence, does not prevent him from *complaining*. And this is very Greek. Homer makes even Mars, when wounded, howl with pain; and Sophocles has filled the "Philoctetes" with cries of physical pain. The Greeks had none of our modern notions respecting the effeminacy of complaint.

It may be objected perhaps to the foregoing view of the Titan, that Æschylus has in the first scene made him imperturbably silent, disdaining to answer the taunts of Power and the pity of Vulcan, as they bind him to the rock. These draw from him no groan, no word, no gesture; he has no defiance for the one, nor

friendly gratitude for the other. It is not until he is left alone that he appeals to Earth, Air, and Ocean. This silence, followed by this passion, produces a sublime effect. But the sublimity was *not* the poet's intention; it is an accidental effect. The silence was simply a *stage necessity*, as I have elsewhere shown. Whether owing to some eurhythmic tendency in the construction of Greek plays, as Gruppe,[1] and after him Bode,[2] have maintained; or, more probably from motives of economy with respect to the actors, as Geppert asserts;[3] certain it is that in the plays of Æschylus more than *two speakers* were never together on the stage, with one trivial exception in the "Choëphoræ," where Pylades says a few words. Hence scholars have been puzzled to account for the distribution of the "Prometheus" into parts. In the first scene the protagonist would take Power and the deuteragonist Vulcan. Prometheus therefore *must* be silent, for there is no one to speak for him. Here comes the difficulty: if Prometheus is necessarily silent during the prologue, how does he become eloquent immediately on being left alone? Welcker[4] supposes that Prometheus was represented by a picture, and the protagonist at the close of the prologue got behind it, and spoke through it; an explanation accepted by Hermann,[5] but shown by Schömann[6] to be full of difficulties. Let that point be settled as it may, the fact remains that the silence of Prometheus was forced by stage necessities, and was *not* meant as an indication of his self-reliance; the further proof of which is to be seen in his wailings and writhings throughout the play — notably in the scene with

[1] "Ariadne: oder die tragische Kunst der Griechen," p. 143.
[2] "Geschichte der Hellen. Dichtkunst," iii. p. 233.
[3] "Alt-Griechische Bühne," p. 58.
[4] "Opusc." ii. p. 146.
[5] "Trilogie," p. 30.
[6] "Prometheus," p. 85.

Mercury (v. 905), where Prometheus is scurrilously fluent.

Shelley never makes his Titan flinch. He stands there as the sublime of *endurance:*

> "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy power which seems omnipotent;
> To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent."

This is grand; but grander far the conception of Goethe, whose Titan knows that he is a god, and that if he be true to himself no power can trouble or destroy his heritage of life and activity:

> "Das was ich habe können sie nicht rauben,
> Und was *sie* haben mögen sie beschützen;
> Hier Mein und Dein,
> Und so sind wir geschieden.
>
> EPIMETHEUS.
>
> Wie vieles ist denn Dein?
>
> PROMETHEUS.
>
> Der Kreis den meine Wirksamkeit erfüllt." [1]

This is a profound truth strikingly brought out. God-like energy is seen only in creation; what we can *do*

[1] That which I have they cannot rob me of; that which they have, let them guard. Here mine, here thine; and thus are we distinguished.

EPIMETHEUS

What, then, is thine?

PROMETHEUS.

The circle my activity doth fill!

we *are;* our strength is measured by our plastic power. Thus the contempt of Prometheus for the idleness, the uncreativeness of the gods, is both deep and constant.

"Curtain thy heavens, Zeus,
With clouds, with mist!
And, like a boy that crushes thistle-tops,
Loosen thy rage on oaks and mountain ridges.
Yet must thou leave
Me my earth standing;
My hut, which myself built;
My hearth, with its bright flame,
Which thou dost envy.
I know nought so pitiful
Under the sun as ye gods!
Scantily nourishing
With the forced offerings
Of tremulous prayer
Your divinity!
Children and beggars,
And fools hope-deluded,
Keep ye from starving!
Who gave me succour
From the fierce Titans?
Who rescued me
From slavery?
Thou! thou, my soul, glowing
With holiest fire!
Yet didst thou, credulous,
Pour forth thy thanks to him
Who slumbers above!
I reverence thee? Wherefore?
Hast lightened the woes
Of the heavily laden?
Hast *thou* dried the tears
Of the troubled in spirit?
Who fashioned me man?
Was it not almighty Time —
And Fate eternal,
Thy lords and mine?
Here I sit and shape
Man in my image:
A race like myself,

That will suffer and weep,
Will rejoice and enjoy,
And scorn thee,
As I!"

Even in this rough plaster-cast of translation, does not the grandeur and beauty of the original shine through?

CHAPTER VII.

LILI.

"I MUST tell you something which makes me happy; and that is the visit of many excellent men of all grades, and from all parts, who, among unimportant and intolerable visitors, call on me often, and stay some time. We first know that we exist, when we recognise ourselves in others (*man weiss erst dass man ist, wenn man sich in andern wiederfindet*)." It is thus he writes to the Countess Augusta von Stolberg, with whom he had formed, through correspondence, one of those romantic friendships which celebrated men, sometime in their lives, are generally led to form. This correspondence is among the most characteristic evidences we have of his mental condition, and should be read by every one who wishes to correct the *tone* of the Autobiography. Above all, it is the repository of his fluctuating feelings respecting Lili, the woman whom, according to his statement to Eckermann, he loved more than any other. "She was the first, and I can also add she is the last, I truly loved; for all the *inclinations* which have since agitated my heart were superficial and trivial in comparison."[1] There is no statement he has made respecting a matter of feeling, to which one may oppose a flatter contradiction. Indeed we find it difficult to believe he uttered such a sentence, unless we remember how carelessly in conversation such retrospective statements are made, and

[1] "Gespräche," iii. p. 299.

how, at his very advanced age, the memory of youthful feelings must have come back upon him with peculiar tenderness. Whatever caused him to make that statement, the statement is very questionable. I do not think that he loved Lili more than Frederika; and we shall hereafter have positive evidence that his love for the Frau von Stein, and for his wife, was of a much deeper and more enduring nature. "My love for Lili," he said to Eckermann, "had something so peculiar and delicate, that even now it has influenced my style in the narrative of that painfully happy epoch. When you read the fourth volume of my Autobiography, you will see that my love was something quite different from love in novels."

Well, the fourth volume is now open to every one, and he must have peculiar powers of divination who can read any profound passion in the narrative. A colder love-history was never written by a poet. There is no emotion warming the narrative; there is little of a loving recollection, gathering all details into one continuous story; it is, indeed, with great difficulty one unravels the story at all. He seems to seize every excuse to interrupt the narrative by general reflections, or by sketches of other poeple. He speaks of himself as "the youth of whom we now write!" He speaks of her, and her circle, in the vaguest manner; and the feelings which agitated him we must "read between the lines."

It is very true, however, that the love there depicted is unlike the love depicted in novels. In novels, whatever may be the amount of foolishness with which the writers adumbrate their ideal of the passion, this truth, at least, is everywhere set forth, that to love we must render up body and soul, heart and mind, all interests and all desires, all prudences and all ambitions, identifying our being with that of another, in union to become elevated. To love is for

the soul to choose a companion, and travel with it along the perilous defiles and winding ways of life; mutually sustaining, when the path is terrible with dangers, mutually exhorting, when it is rugged with obstructions, and mutually rejoicing, when rich broad plains and sunny slopes make the journey a delight, showing in the quiet distance the resting-place we all seek in this world.

It was not such companionship he sought with Lili; it was not such self-devotion which made him restlessly happy in her love. This child of sixteen, in all the merciless grace of maidenhood, proudly conscious of her power, ensnared his roving heart through the lures of passionate desire, but she never touched his soul; as the story we have to tell will sufficiently prove.

Anna Elizabeth Schönemann, immortalised as Lili, was the daughter of a great banker in Frankfort, and a Frenchwoman of birth, now a widow living in splendid style. She was sixteen when Goethe first fell in love with her. The age is significant. It was somewhat the age of Frederika, Lotte, Antoinette, and Maximiliane. An age when girlhood has charms of grace and person, of beauty and freshness, which even those will not deny who profoundly feel the superiority of a developed woman. There is poetry in this age; but there is no depth, no fulness of character. Imagine the wide-sweeping mind of the author of "Götz," "Faust," "Prometheus," "The Wandering Jew," "Mahomet," in companionship with the mind of a girl of sixteen!

Young, graceful, and charming, she was confessedly a coquette. Early in their acquaintance, in one of those pleasant hours of overflowing egotism wherein lovers take pride in the confession of faults (not without intimation of nobler qualities), Lili told him the story of her life; told him what a flirt she had been;

told him, moreover, that she had tried her spells on him, and was punished by being herself ensnared. Armida found herself spellbound by Rinaldo; but this Rinaldo followed her into the enchanted gardens more out of adventurous curiosity than love.

There was considerable difference in their stations; and the elegant society he met in the house of the banker's widow was every way discordant to the wild youth, whose thoughts were of Nature, and unconstrained freedom. The balls and concerts to which he followed her were little to his taste. "If," he writes to Augusta von Stolberg, "if you can imagine a Goethe in braided coat, from head to foot in the gallantest costume, amid the glare of chandeliers, fastened to the card-table by a pair of bright eyes, surrounded by all sorts of people, driven in endless dissipation from concert to ball, and with frivolous interest making love to a pretty blonde, then will you have a picture of the present Carnival-Goethe." In the following poem he expresses Lili's fascination and his uneasiness (the translation aims at accuracy of meaning rather than poetry, because the meaning is here the motive for my citing the poem):

"Wherefore so resistlessly dost draw me
Into scenes so bright?
Had I not enough to soothe and charm me
In the lonely night?

"Homely in my little room secluded,
While the moon's bright beams
In a shimmering light fell softly on me,
As I lay in dreams.

"Dreaming thro' the golden hours of rapture
Soothed my heart to rest,
As I felt thy image sweetly living
Deep within my breast.

"Can it be I sit at yonder table,
Gay with cards and lights,
Forced to meet intolerable people,
Because 'tis *she* invites?

"Alas! the gentle bloom of spring no longer
Cheereth my poor heart,
There is only spring, and love, and nature,
Angel, where thou art!"

The real Goethe is thus drawn in contrast by himself in his letter to Augusta: "But there is another, who in gray beaver coat, with boots, and a brown silk neckerchief, who, ever living in himself, working and striving, now throwing the innocent feelings of youth into little poems, now the strong spices of life into dramas, sketching his friends in chalk, asking neither right nor left what will be thought of his doings, because he always rises through work a step higher, because he springs at no ideal, but lets his nature develop itself fighting and playing." Here the true chord vibrates. Born for poetry, and not to pass his life in ballrooms dangling after a pretty blonde who coquetted with him and with others, he feels that his passion is a folly. Now when a man feels that — "Cupid may have tapped him on the shoulder, but I warrant him heart whole." Read this poem, and read in it the struggle:

"Heart, my heart, what is this feeling,
That doth weigh on thee so sore?
What new life art thou revealing,
That I know myself no more?
Gone is all that once was dearest,
Gone the care that once was nearest;
Gone the labour, gone the bliss,
Ah! whence comes such change as this?
Art thou spellbound by the beauty
Of a sweetly blooming face;

Beauteous shape, and look so truthful,
And an all-resistless grace?
When the bonds I strive to sever,
Man myself to flee for ever,
Vain are all my efforts, vain!
And but lead me back again.

"With such magic-web she binds me,
To burst through I have no skill;
All-absorbing passion blinds me,
Paralyses my poor will.
In her charmèd sphere delaying,
I must live, her will obeying:
Great, oh! great to me the change!
Love, oh! free me! let me range!"[1]

Lili coquetted, and her coquetry seems to have cooled his passion for awhile, though she knew how to rekindle it.

Not only had he to suffer from her thoughtlessness, but also from the thoughtlessness of parents on both sides. It was not a marriage acceptable to either house. The banker's daughter, it was thought, should marry into some rich or noble family. A poet, who belonged to a well-to-do yet comparatively unimportant family, was not exactly the bridegroom most desired. On the other hand, the proud, stiff old Rath did not greatly rejoice in the prospect of having a fine lady for his daughter-in-law. Cornelia, who knew her father, and knew his pedantic ways, wrote strongly against the marriage. Merck, Crespel, Horn, and other friends, were all decidedly opposed to so incompatible a match. But of course the lovers were only thrown closer together by these attempts to separate them.

A certain Demoiselle Delf managed to overcome

[1] No one can be more sensible than I am of the inadequacy of this translation, but the English reader would rather have a poor translation than an original he could not understand; and the German reader has only to turn to the original if it does not linger in his memory.

objections, and gain the consent of both families. "How she commenced it, how she got over the difficulties, I know not, but one evening she came to us bringing the consent. 'Take each other's hands,' she cried, in a half-pathetic, half-imperious manner: I advanced to Lili and held out my hand: in it she placed hers, not indeed reluctantly, yet slowly. With a deep sigh we sank into each other's arms, greatly agitated."

No formal bethrothal seems to have taken place. Indeed, the consent which was obtained seems in nowise to have altered the feeling of friends and relatives. The nearer marriage seemed, the more impracticable it appeared. To Goethe, after the first flush of joy had subsided, the idea of marriage was in itself enough to make him uneasy, and to sharpen his sense of the *disparity* in station. The arrival of the two Counts Stolberg, and their proposal that he should accompany them in a tour through Switzerland, gave an excuse for freeing himself from Lili, "as an experiment to try whether he could renounce her."

Before accompanying him on his journey, it is necessary to cast a retrospective glance at some biographical details, omitted while the story of Lili was narrated. The mornings were devoted to poetry, the middle of the day to jurisprudence. Poetry was the breathing-room of his heart. In it he sought to escape from the burden of intolerable doubts. "If I did not write dramas I should be lost," he tells Augusta von Stolberg. Among these dramas we must place "Stella," for which, as we learn from a letter to Merck, the publisher offered twenty dollars — that is to say, three pounds sterling. What an insight this gives into the state of Literature; the author of two immensely popular works is offered three pounds for a drama in five acts! Poor Schiller, subsequently, was glad

to write histories and translate memoirs for fifteen or eighteen shillings a sheet of sixteen pages.

In "Stella" I can trace no biographical element, and perhaps the absence of this element makes the weakness of the drama. A poorer production was never owned by a great poet; although there have not been wanting critics to see in this also the broad handling of a master. It is the old story of the Count von Gleichen and his two wives. Fernando has deserted his wife, and formed an attachment to Stella; but the peculiarity of the situation is, that he quitted Cecilia, his wife, from no assignable cause, without even having outlived his love for her. He has indeed every reason to respect and cherish her as the mother of his child, and as a high-principled, virtuous woman; but he flies from her like a coward, flies to one more passionate, because she gives him the transports of passion in exchange for his wife's calm affection. The two women meet, and discover their love for the same man.

Here is a fine dramatic collision. On the one side Fernando sees Duty in the shape of a noble, suffering wife, and an engaging daughter; on the other, Passion in the shape of a fascinating mistress. But with this suggestive subject Goethe has done little. He shows us the contemptible weakness of the wavering Fernando, but the subject he has not powerfully wrought out. As I cannot recommend any one to read this play, the two masterly touches it contains may here be cited. The following is delicately observed:

"We women believe in men! *In the ardour of passion they deceive themselves, how then can we help being deceived by them?*"

This also is charming: Fernando returns to Stella after a long absence, and in their endearments she says:

"*Stella.* How we love you! We do not think of the grief you cause us!

Fernando (*stroking her hair*). And has the grief made your hair gray? It is fortunate your hair is so golden . . . nay, none seems to have fallen out! (*Takes the comb from her hair, which falls on her shoulders. He then twines the hair round his arm, exclaiming:*) Rinaldo once more in the ancient chains!"

Artists complain of the dearth of subjects; will no one try his hand at that? Originally the dénouement of this "play for lovers" (as it was called) solved the difficulty by a romantic piece of bigamy. Fernando is about to fly with Cecilia — about to return to his duty, when his wife — compassionating the situation of Stella, if Fernando should leave her — resolves to sacrifice her conjugal claims, and to *share* him with Stella. The curtain falls as he embraces them both, exclaiming: "Mine! mine!"

This roused vehement opposition. It was said to be a plea in favour of bigamy. The public dimly felt that, instead of being a proper solution of the problem, it was on the whole rather ridiculous. Still more unsatisfactory, however, if deeply considered, is the dénouement which was added when the play was produced at Weimar, and which now takes the place of the original in his collected works. Therein Fernando, unable to quit Stella, and unable to quit his wife, weeps with both, and blows his brains out. This is an *evasion* of the difficulty, not a solution.

In 1798, a feeble translation of "Stella" was published in England, and suggested to Canning his admirable caricature, "The Rovers," familiar to all readers of the *Antijacobin.* Among the ludicrous passages of this parody is the famous vow of friendship:

"*Matilda.* A sudden thought strikes me. Let us swear an eternal friendship.

Cecilia. Let us agree to live together."

But this is really a very slight variation from the original:

"*Stella.* Madame! Da fährt mir ein Gedanke durch den Kopf — Wir wollen einander das seyn, was sie uns hätten werden sollen! Wir wollen beisammen bleiben! — Ihre Hand! — Von diesem Augenblick an, lass' ich Sie nicht!"

Besides "Stella," he worked at "Faust," translated Solomon's Song, and wrote the opera of "Claudine von Villa Bella," several passages for Lavater's "Physiognomy," and many smaller poems.

The Stolbergs, with whom the Swiss journey was made, were two ardent admirers of Klopstock, and two specimens of the defiant "genius" class which scorned convention. They hated imaginary tyrants; outraged sober citizens by their reckless recurrence to a supposed "state of nature;" and astonished sensible citizens by their exaggerated notions of friendship. Merck was pitiless in his sarcasms and warnings. He could not tolerate the idea of Goethe's travelling with these *Burschen.* But Goethe had too much of kindred devilry in him, breaking out at moments, to object to the wildness of his companions; though he began to suspect all was not right when, after violating every other *convenance,* they insisted on bathing in public. "Nature" having nothing to say against naked youths in the bright sunshine, what business had old Humdrum to cover his eyes with modest hands, and pretend to be shocked? However, so little prepossessed was Humdrum in favour of the Nude, that stones were showered upon these children of Nature; a criticism which effectively modified their practice, if it failed to alter their views.

Drinking the health of Stolberg's mistress, and then dashing the glasses against the wall to prevent their

being desecrated by other lips after so solemn a consecration (a process which looked less heroic when *item'd* in the bill next day), and otherwise demeaning themselves like true children of "genius," they passed a wild and merry time. This journey need not longer detain us. Two visits alone deserve mention. One was to Karl August, who was then in Karlsruhe arranging his marriage with the Princess Luise, and who very pressingly invited the poet to Weimar. The other was to his sister Cornelia, who earnestly set before him all the objections to a marriage with Lili. "I made no promises," he says, "although forced to confess that she had convinced me. I left her with that strange feeling in my heart with which passion nourishes itself; for the boy Cupid clings obstinately to the garment of Hope even when she is preparing with long strides to depart." The image of Lili haunted him amid the lovely scenes of Nature:

> "Dearest Lili, if I did not love thee,
> How entrancing were a scene like this!
> Yet, my Lili, if I did not love thee,
> What were any bliss?"

It was her image which endeared him to his native land. His father, always desirous he should see Italy, was now doubly anxious he should go there, as the surest means of a separation from Lili. But "Lombardy and Italy," says the poet, "lay before me a strange land; while the dear home of Germany lay behind, full of sweet domesticities, and where — let me confess it — *she* lived who so long had enchained me, in whom my existence was centred. A little golden heart, which in my happiest hours I had received from her, still hung round my neck. I drew it forth and covered it with kisses."

On his return to Frankfort he learned that Lili's friends had taken advantage of his absence to try and

bring about a separation, arguing, not without justice, that his absence was a proof of lukewarmness. But Lili remained firm; and it was said that she had declared herself willing to go with him to America. A sentence from the Autobiography is worth quoting, as a specimen of that love "so unlike the love to be found in novels," which he declared had given a peculiar tone to his narrative. It is in reference to this willingness of Lili to go to America: "the very thing which should have animated my hopes depressed them. My fair paternal house, only a few hundred paces from hers, was after all more endurable and attractive than a remote, hazardous spot beyond the seas!" A sentence which recalls Gibbon's antithesis, on his resignation of his early love: "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son."

He was restless and unhappy during these months, for he was not strong enough to give up Lili, nor sufficiently in love to marry her; jealous of those who surrounded her, hurt by her coldness, he was every now and then led captive by her tenderness. There were moments when bygone days seemed once more restored, and then instantly vanished again. His poem of "Lili's Menagerie" expresses his surly disgust at the familiar faces which surround her. The Bear of the menagerie is a portrait of himself.

Turning to Art for consolation, he began the tragedy of "Egmont," which he completed many years afterward in Italy. It was a work which demanded more repose than could be found in his present condition, and I hasten to the dénouement of an episode, which, amid fluctuations of feeling, steadily advanced to an end that must have been foreseen. The betrothal was cancelled. He was once more free. Free, but not happy. His heart still yearned for her, rather because there lay in his nature a need of loving, than because she was the woman fitted to share his life.

He lingered about the house o' nights, wrapped in his mantle, satisfied if he could catch a glimpse of her shadow on the blind, as she moved about the room. One night he heard her singing at the piano. His pulses throbbed, as he distinguished his own song:

> "Wherefore so resistlessly dost draw me
> Into scenes so bright?" —

the song he had written in the morning of their happiness! Her voice ceased. She rose, and walked up and down the room, little dreaming that her lover was beneath her window.

To give decision to his wavering feelings, there came, most opportunely, a visitor to Frankfort. This was in September. Karl August, with his bride, on his way to Weimar, once more pressed him to spend a few weeks at his court. The rapid inclination which had sprung up between the Prince and the Poet — the desire to see something of the great world — the desire, moreover, to quit Frankfort, all combined to make him eagerly accept the invitation. His father, indeed, tried to dissuade him; partly because he did not like the intercourse of plain citizens with princes; partly because the recent experience of Voltaire with Frederick the Great seemed to point to an inevitable termination in disgrace, if not evaded by servility. His consent was extorted at last, however, and Goethe quitted for ever the paternal roof.

Eighteen months afterward Lili married a rich banker, Bernhard von Türkheim, with whom she lived happily as wife and mother, though cherishing a tender romantic feeling for her early admirer, and this all the more now that he had become a world-famous poet. Eighteen years afterward we catch a glimpse of her, in a letter of the Countess von Beaulieu-Maconnay, who describes her as preserving a passionate veneration for

the one being who had prescribed her path in life to her, who had generously refused the sacrifice she had offered him, and whose spiritual influence had made her what she was.[1]

[1] See Stahr: "Goethe's Frauengestalten." 3d Aufl. 1870, i. p. 239.

Book the Fourth

1775 to 1779

"Quis novus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes?
Quem sese ore ferens! quam forti pectore et armis!
Credo equidem, nec vana fides, genus esse Deorum."
— *Virgil.*

"Tolle Zeiten hab' ich erlebt und hab' nicht ermangelt,
Selbst auch thöricht zu sein wie es die Zeit mir gebot."

CHAPTER I.

WEIMAR IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

On the 7th of November, 1775, Goethe, aged twenty-six, arrived at the little city on the banks of the Ilm, where his long residence was to confer on an insignificant duchy the immortal renown of a German Athens.

Small indeed is the space occupied on the map by the duchy of Saxe-Weimar; yet the historian of the German courts declares, and truly, that after Berlin there is no court of which the nation is so proud.[1] Frederick the Great and Wolfgang Goethe have raised these courts into centres of undying interest. Of Weimar it is necessary we should form a distinct idea, if we would understand the outward life of the poet.

"Klein ist unter den Fürsten Germaniens freilich der meine,
Kurz und schmal ist sein Land, mässig nur was er vermag."

"Small among German princes is mine, poor and narrow his kingdom, limited his power of doing good." Thus sings Goethe in that poem, so honourable to both, wherein he acknowledges his debt to Karl August. The geographical importance of Weimar was, and is, small; but we in England have proud reason to know how great a place in the world can be filled by a nation whose place is trivial on the map. We know, moreover, that the Athens, which it is the pride of Weimar to claim as a patronymic, was but a dot upon the surface of Europe, a dot of earth, feeding some twenty thousand freemen, who not only extended the

[1] Vehse; "Geschichte der Deutschen Höfe seit der Reformation," vol. xxviii. p. 3.

empire of their arms from Eubœa to the Thracian Bosphorus, but who left their glories in Literature, Philosophy, and Art, as marvels and as models for the civilised world. It is interesting, therefore, to know how small this duchy of Saxe-Weimar was, that we may appreciate the influence exercised by means so circumscribed. We must know how absurdly scant the income of its generous prince, who, as I am credibly informed, would occasionally supply the deficiencies of his purse by the princely unprinceliness of selling to the Jews a diamond ring, or ancestral snuff-box, that he might hand the proceeds to some struggling artist or poet. I mention this lest it should be supposed that a sarcastic spirit has dictated the enumeration of unimposing details, in the following attempt to reconstruct some image of Weimar and its court.

Weimar is an ancient city on the Ilm, a small stream rising in the Thuringian forests, and losing itself in the Saale, at Jena; this stream (on which the sole navigation seems to be that of ducks) meanders peacefully through pleasant valleys, except during the rainy season, when mountain-torrents swell its current, and overflow its banks. The Trent, between Trentham and Stafford — "the smug and silver Trent," as Shakespeare calls it — will give an idea of this stream. The town is charmingly placed in the Ilm valley, and stands some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. "Weimar," says the old topographer, Mathew Merian, "is *Weinmar*, because it was the wine market for Jena and its environs. Others say it was because some one here in ancient days began to plant the vine, who was hence called *Weinmayer*. But of this each reader may believe just what he pleases."[1]

On a first acquaintance, Weimar seems more like a

[1] "Topographia Superioris Saxoniæ, Thuringiæ," etc., 1650, p. 188.

village bordering a park, than a capital with a court, having all courtly environments. It is so quiet, so simple; and although ancient in its architecture, has none of the picturesqueness which delights the eye in most old German cities. The stone-coloured, light brown, and apple-green houses have high-peaked, slanting roofs, but no quaint gables, no caprices of architectural fancy, none of the mingling of varied styles which elsewhere charms the traveller. One learns to love its quiet, simple streets and pleasant paths, fit theatre for the simple actors moving across the scene; but one must live there some time to discover its charm. The aspect it presented, when Goethe arrived, was of course very different from that presented now (in 1854); but by diligent inquiry we may get some rough image of the place restored. First be it noted that the city walls were still erect: gates and portcullis still spoke of days of warfare. Within these walls were six or seven hundred houses, not more, most of them very ancient. Under these roofs were about seven thousand inhabitants — for the most part not handsome. The city gates were strictly guarded. No one could pass through them in cart or carriage without leaving his name in the sentinel's book; even Goethe, minister and favourite, could not escape this tiresome formality; as we gather from one of his letters to the Frau von Stein, directing her to go out alone, and meet him beyond the gates, lest their exit together should be known. During Sunday service a chain was thrown across the streets leading to the church, to bar out all passengers; a practice to this day partially retained: the chain is fastened, but the passengers step over it without ceremony. There was little safety at night in those silent streets; for if you were in no great danger from marauders, you were in constant danger of breaking a limb in some hole or other; the idea of lighting streets not having presented

itself to the Thuringian mind. In the year 1685, the streets of London were first lighted with lamps; in 1775 Germany had not yet ventured on that experiment. If in 1854 Weimar is still innocent of gas, and perplexes its inhabitants with the dim obscurity of an occasional oil-lamp slung on a cord across the streets, we can understand that in 1775 it had not even advanced so far. And our supposition is exact.[1]

The palace, which now forms three sides of a quadrangle, and is truly palatial in appearance, was in ashes when Goethe arrived. The ducal pair inhabited the Fürstenhaus, which stands opposite. The park was not in existence. In its place there was the *Welsche Garten*, a garden arranged after the pattern of Versailles, with trees trimmed into set shapes, with square beds, canals, bridges, and a Babylonic spiral tower called *Die Schnecke*, in which the people assembled to hear music, and to enjoy punch and sweet cakes. To the left of this garden stood the nucleus of the present park, and a wooded mass stretching as far as Upper Weimar.

Saxe-Weimar has no trade, no manufactures, no animation of commercial, political, or even theological activity. This part of Saxony, be it remembered, was the home and shelter of Protestantism in its birth. Only a few miles from Weimar stands Wartburg, where Luther, in the disguise of Squire George, lived in safety, translating the Bible, and hurling his inkstand at the head of Satan, like a rough-handed disputant as he was. In the market-place of Weimar stand, to this day, two houses from the windows of which Tetzel advertised his indulgences, and Luther afterward in fiery indignation fulminated against them. These

[1] In a decree made at Cassel, in 1775, this sentence is noticeable: "In every house as soon as the alarum sounds at night, every inhabitant must hold out a lighted lantern, in order that the people may find their way in the streets." — Quoted by Biedermann: "Deutschland im 18ten Jahrhundert," i. p. 370.

records of religious struggle still remain, but are no longer suggestions for the continuance of the strife. The fire is burnt out; and perhaps in no city of Europe is theology so placid, so entirely at rest. The Wartburg still rears its picturesque eminence over the lovely Thuringian valleys; and Luther's room is visited by thousands of pilgrims; but in this very palace of the Wartburg, beside the room where Luther struggled with Satan, the visitors are shown the Banqueting-Hall of the Minnesingers, where poet challenged poet, and the *Sängerkrieg*, or Minstrels' Contest, was celebrated. The contrast may be carried further. It may be taken as a symbol of the intellectual condition of Saxe-Weimar, that while the *relics* of Luther are simply preserved, the Minstrel Hall is now being restored in more than its pristine splendour. Lutheran theology is crumbling away, just as the famous *inkspot* has disappeared beneath the gradual scrapings of visitors' penknives; but the minstrelsy, of which the Germans are so proud, daily receives fresh honour and adulation. Nor is this adulation a mere revival. Every year the Wartburg saw assembled the members of that numerous family (the Bachs) which, driven from Hungary in the period of Reform, had settled in Saxony, and had given, besides the great John Sebastian Bach, many noble musicians to the world. Too numerous to gain a livelihood in one city, the Bachs agreed to meet every year at the Wartburg. This custom, which was continued till the close of the eighteenth century, not only presented the singular spectacle of one family consisting of no less than a hundred and twenty musicians, but was also the occasion of musical entertainments such as were never heard before. They began by religious hymns, sung in chorus; they then took for their theme some popular song, comic or licentious, varying it by the improvisation of four, five, or six parts; these improvisations were named *Quolibets*, and are con-

sidered by many writers to have been the origin of German opera.

The theologic fire has long burnt itself out in Thuringia. In Weimar, where Luther preached, another preacher came, whom we know as Goethe. In the old church there is one portrait of Luther, painted by his friend Lucas Kranach, greatly prized, as well it may be; but for this one portrait of Luther, there are a hundred of Goethe. It is not Luther, but Goethe, they think of here; poetry, not theology, is the glory of Weimar. And, corresponding with this, we find the dominant characteristic of the place to be no magnificent church, no picturesque ancient buildings, no visible image of the earlier ages, but the sweet serenity of a lovely park. The park fills the foreground of the picture, and always rises first in the memory. Any one who has spent happy hours wandering through its sunny walks and winding shades, watching its beauties changing through the fulness of summer, and the striking contrasts of autumn as it deepens into winter, will easily understand how Goethe could have been content to live in so small a city, which had, besides its nest of friends, so charming a park. It was indeed mainly his own creation; and as it filled a large space in his life, it demands more than a passing allusion here.

Southwards from the palace it begins, with no obstacle of wall or iron gate, servant or sentinel, to *seem* to shut us out, so let us enter and look around. In the dew of morning, and in the silence of moonlight, we may wander undisturbed as if in our own grounds. The land stretches for miles away without barrier; park and yellow cornlands forming one friendly expanse. If we pass into it from the palace gates, a winding path to the right conducts us into the Belvedere Allée: a magnificent avenue of chestnut-trees, two miles long, stretching from the new street to the summer palace

of Belvedere. This affords a shaded promenade along the park, in summer grateful for its coolness, in autumn looking like an avenue of golden trees. It terminates in the gardens of the Belvedere, which has its park also beautifully disposed. Here the Weimarians resort, to enjoy the fresh air after their fashion, namely, with accompaniments of bad beer, questionable coffee, and detestable tobacco.

If, instead of turning into the Belvedere Allée, we keep within the park, our walks are so numerous that choice becomes perplexing. Let us cross the *Stern Brucke*, a bridge leading from the palace. Turning to our right, we pass along through noble trees, charmed by —

> "The sound of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> Which to the quiet trees all night
> Singeth a quiet tune."

We reach the broad road leading to Upper Weimar. On this road, which skirts a meadow washed by the Ilm, we shall pass Goethe's *Gartenhaus* (Garden House, to be described hereafter), and then winding round the meadow, cross another bridge, and enter a shadowy path, picturesque with well-grouped trees — the solemn pine, the beech, whose dark green patches of moss increase the brilliancy of its silver bark, the weeping birch with its airy elegance of form, the plane-tree, the elm, the chestnut and the mountain ash brilliant with berries hanging like clusters of coral against the deep blue of the sky. One steep side of this path is craggy with masses of moss-covered rock; beneath the other flows the Ilm. A few paces from the bridge which leads us here stands the *Borkenhaus* (Bark House), a hermit's hut, erected by Goethe for a *fête* of the duchess, and subsequently the favourite residence of the duke. It is only twenty feet long and

fourteen deep, built entirely of wood, and plastered (so to speak) with the bark of trees. It rests against a rock amid the trees, and is surrounded by a wooden gallery, reached by rough wooden steps. Where is the prince who would live in such a hut nowadays? Where are the ministers who would attend council in such a hut? Yet, here Karl August lived alone, glad to escape from the tedium of etiquette, and the palling pleasures of a little court. Here he debated affairs of state, not less momentous to him because they were trivial in European politics. Here he bathed in the Ilm running beneath. Here he could see the garden-house of his poet, and telegraph to him across the Park. In this single room, which was at once dining-room, council-chamber, study, and bedroom, the manly duke lived alone for months.

From the *Borkenhaus* a small flight of stone steps conducts us to a mimic Ruin, and thence a narrow winding path leads to a stone monument, interesting as a witness to the growth of a mythos. It is an antique column, four feet high, round which a serpent winds, in the act of devouring the offering cakes on the top. The inscription says *Genio Loci.* But the Weimar *plebs,* disregarding antique symbols, and imperfectly acquainted with Virgil, has a legend to tell; a legend sprung, no one knows whence, rapid and mysterious as the growth of fungi, like most legends, to satisfy the imperious craving for *explanations;* a legend which certifies how, formerly, a huge serpent dwelt in this spot, the terror of Weimar, until a cunning baker bethought him of placing poisoned cakes within the monster's reach; and when the greedy ignorance of the serpent had relieved Weimar of the monster, a grateful people erected this monument to an energetic and inventive baker. *Et voilà, comme on écrit l'histoire.*

I will not fatigue the reader by dragging him all

over this much-loved park, which must be enjoyed directly, not through description;[1] enough for present purposes if it be added that, while the summer palace of Belvedere is connected with Weimar by the chestnut avenue, the summer palace and park of Tiefurt is also connected with Weimar by a richly wooded road, the Webicht. This Tiefurt is a tiny little place, quite a curiosity of diminutiveness. The park, through which runs a branch of the Ilm, is tiny but picturesque. The upper story of the palace is a labyrinth of tiny rooms, some of them so small that, standing with your back against one wall, you can touch the opposite wall with your hand. It was here the Duchess Amalia lived.

"I have lived here fifty years," said Goethe to Eckermann, "and where have I not been? but I was always glad to return to Weimar." The stranger may wonder wherein lies the charm; but a residence at Weimar soon reveals the secret. Among the charms are the environs. First there is Ettersburg, with its palace, woods, and park, some seven miles distant. Then there is Bercka with its charming valley, dear to all pedestrians, within half a dozen miles; a little further is Jena and its enchanting valley, from whose heights we look down on the sombre city, rendered illustrious by so many sounding names. Jena was to science what Weimar was to poetry. Assembled there were men like Griesbach, Paulus, Baumgarten-Crusius, and Danz, to teach theology; Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, Reinhold, and Fries, to teach philosophy; Loder, Hufeland, Oken, Döbereiner, to teach science; Luden, Schultz, and others, for history. The Schlegels and the Humboldts also lent their lustre to the place. Besides Jena, we must mention Ilmenau,

[1] If a fuller description be desired, the reader will find one in the charming pages of Stahr's "Weimar und Jena," to which I take this occasion of acknowledging a large debt.

Eisenach, the Thuringian forests, and the valley of the Saale: environs attractive enough for the most restless wanderer.

Having thus sketched the main features of the *place*, it will now be desirable to give some indication of the *times*, that we may understand the atmosphere in which Goethe lived. Difficult as the restoration of Weimar has been to me, and only possible through the aid of what still remains from the old time, the difficulty has been tenfold with regard to the more changing aspects of society and opinion. Curiously enough, the Germans, famous for writing on all subjects, have produced no work on the state of manners and the domestic conditions of this much be-written period. The books on Goethe are endless; there is not one which tells us of the outward circumstances among which he moved. From far and wide I have gathered together some details which may aid in forming a picture.

Remember that we are in the middle of the eighteenth century. The French Revolution is as yet only gathering its forces together; nearly twenty years must elapse before the storm breaks. The chasm between that time and our own is vast and deep. Every detail speaks of it. To begin with Science — everywhere the torch of civilisation — it is enough to say that Chemistry did not then exist. Abundant materials indeed existed, but that which makes a Science, viz., the power of *prevision* based on *quantitative* knowledge, was still absent; and Alchemy maintained its place among the conflicting hypotheses of the day. Goethe in Frankfort was busy with researches after the "virgin earth." The philosopher's stone had many eager seekers. In 1787 Semler sent to the Academy of Berlin his discovery that gold grew in a certain atmospheric salt, when kept moist and warm. Klaproth, in the name of the Academy,

examined this salt, and found indeed gold leaf in it — which had been put there by Semler's servant to encourage his master's credulity. This age, so incredulous in religion, was credulous in science. In spite of all the labours of the Encyclopedists, in spite of all the philosophic and religious "enlightenment," in spite of Voltaire and La Mettrie, it was possible for Count St. Germain and Cagliostro to delude thousands: and Casanova found a dupe in the Marquise d'Urfé, who believed he could restore her youth, and make the moon impregnate her! It was in 1774 that Mesmer astonished Vienna with his marvels of mystic magnetism. The secret societies of Freemasons and Illuminati, mystic in their ceremonies and chimerical in their hopes — now in quest of the philosopher's stone, now in quest of the perfectibility of mankind — a mixture of religious, political, and mystical reveries, flourished in all parts of Germany, and in all circles.

With Science in so imperfect a condition, we are sure to find a corresponding poverty in material comfort and luxury. High-roads, for example, were only found in certain parts of Germany; Prussia had no chaussée till 1787. Milestones were unknown, although finger-posts existed. Instead of facilitating the transit of travellers, it was thought good political economy to obstruct them, for the longer they remained the more money they spent in the country. A century earlier, stage-coaches were known in England; but in Germany, public conveyances, very rude to this day in places where no railway exists, were few and miserable; nothing but open carts with unstuffed seats. Diligences on springs were unknown before 1800; and what they were, not many years ago, many readers doubtless remember. Then as to speed. In 1754 there was "the flying coach" running from Manchester to London, but taking four days and a half on the journey. In 1763 there was a coach

between Edinburgh and London, once a month; it passed twelve or fourteen days on the road; though even in our own stage-coach days the distance was performed in forty-eight hours. And as England was a busy nation, always in a hurry, we may gather from these details some idea of the rapidity of German travel. Germans were not flurried by agitations as to loss of time: if you travelled post, it was said with pride that seldom more than an hour's waiting was necessary before the horses were got ready, — at least on frequented routes. Mail travelling was at the rate of five English miles in an hour and a quarter. Letters took nine days from Berlin to Frankfort (which in 1854 required only twenty-four hours). So slow was the communication of news that, as we learn from the Stein correspondence, the death of Frederick the Great was only known in Carlsbad as a rumour a week afterward. "By this time," writes Goethe, "you must know in Weimar if it be true." With these obstacles to locomotion, it was natural that men travelled but rarely, and mostly on horseback. What the inns were may be imagined from the infrequency of travellers, and the general state of domestic comfort.

The absence of comfort and luxury (luxury as distinguished from ornament) may be gathered from the Memoirs of the time, and from such works as Bertuch's "Mode Journal." Such necessities as good locks, doors that shut, drawers opening easily, tolerable knives, carts on springs, or beds fit for a Christian of any other than the German persuasion, are still rarities in Thuringia; but in those days, when sewers were undreamed of, and a post-office was only a vision, much that we moderns consider as comfort was necessarily wanting. The furniture, even of palaces, was extremely simple. In the houses of wealthy bourgeois, chairs and tables were of common deal; not until the close of the eighteenth century did mahogany

make its appearance. Looking-glasses followed. The chairs were covered with a coarse green cloth; the tables likewise; and carpets are only now beginning to loom upon the national mind as a possible luxury. The windows were hung with woollen curtains, when the extravagance of curtains was ventured on. Easy-chairs were unknown; the only armchair allowed was the so-called *Grandfather's chair*, which was reserved for the dignity of gray hairs, or the feebleness of age.

The *salon de réception*, or drawing-room, into which greatly honoured visitors were shown, had of course a kind of Sunday splendour, not dimmed by week-day familiarity. There hung the curtains; the walls were adorned with family portraits or some work of native talent; the tables alluring the eye with china, in guise of cups, vases, impossible shepherds and very allegorical dogs. Into this room the honoured visitor was ushered; and there, no matter what the hour, refreshment of some kind was handed. This custom — a compound product of hospitality and bad inns — lingered until lately in England, and perhaps is still not unknown in provincial towns.

On eating and drinking was spent the surplus now devoted to finery. No one then, except gentlemen of the first water, boasted of a gold snuff-box; even a gold-headed cane was an unusual elegance. The dandy contented himself with a silver watch. The fine lady blazoned herself with a gold watch and heavy chain; but it was an heirloom! To see a modern dinner service glittering with silver, glass, and china, and to think that even the nobility in those days ate off pewter, is enough to make the lapse of time very vivid to us. A silver teapot and tea-tray were held as princely magnificence.

The manners were rough and simple. The journeymen ate at the same table with their masters, and joined in the coarse jokes which then passed for

hilarity. Filial obedience was rigidly enforced; the stick or strap not unfrequently aiding parental authority. Even the brothers exercised an almost paternal authority over their sisters. Indeed, the position of women was by no means such as our women can hear of with patience; not only were they kept under the paternal, marital, and fraternal yoke, but society limited their actions by its prejudices still more than it does now. No woman of the better class of citizens could go out alone; the servant girl followed her to church, to a shop, or even to the promenade.

The coarseness of language may be imagined from our own literature of that period. The roughness of manners is shown by such a scene as that in "Wilhelm Meister," where the *Schöne Seele* in her confessions (speaking of high, well-born society) narrates how, at an evening party, forfeits were introduced; one of these forfeits is, that a gentleman shall say something gallant to every lady present; he whispers in the ear of a lady, who boxes his ear, and boxes it with such violence that the powder from his hair flies into a lady's eyes; when she is enabled to see again, it is to see that her husband has drawn his sword, and stabbed the offender, and that a duel, in the very presence of these women, is only prevented by one of the combatants being dragged from the room.

The foregoing survey would be incomplete without some notice of the *prices* of things; the more so as we shall learn hereafter that the pension Karl August gave Schiller was two hundred thalers — about £30 of our money; that the salary of Seckendorf as *Kammerherr* was only six hundred thalers, or about £100; and that the salary Goethe received, as Councillor of Legation, was only twelve hundred thalers, about £200 per annum. It is necessary I should indicate something like the real relation of these sums to the expense of living. We find, in Schiller's correspondence with

Körner, that he hires a riding-horse for sixpence a day (vol. i. p. 84), and gets a manuscript fairly copied at the rate of three halfpence a sheet of sixteen pages (vol. i. p. 92) — with us the charge is twopence for every seventy-two words; the whole of "Don Carlos" cost but three and sixpence for copying. He hires a furnished apartment, consisting of two rooms and a bedroom, for two pounds twelve and sixpence a quarter (Charlotte von Kalb writing to Jean Paul, November, 1776, says his lodgings will only cost him ten dollars, or thirty shillings, a quarter); while his male servant, who in case of need can act as secretary, is to be had for eighteen shillings a quarter (vol. i. p. 111). Reckoning up his expenses he says, "Washing, servants, the barber, and such things, all paid quarterly, and none exceeding six shillings; so that, speaking in round numbers, I shall hardly need more than four hundred and fifty dollars" (vol. ii. p. 94) — that is, about £70 a year. Even when he is married, and sees a family growing round him, he says, "With eight hundred dollars I can live here, in Jena, charmingly — *recht artig*" (vol. ii. p. 153).

It is evident that in Weimar they led no very sumptuous life. A small provincial town overshadowed by a court, its modes of life were the expression of this contrast. The people, a slow, heavy, ungraceful, ignorant, but good-natured, happy, honest race, feeding on black bread and sausages; rising higher, there were the cultivated classes of employés, artists, and professors; and higher still, the aristocracy. In the theatre, until 1825, the nobility alone were allowed admission to the boxes, and when the Jena students crowded the pit, elbowing out the Weimar public, that public was forced to return home, or jostle with the students for seats in pit and gallery. Even when the theatre was rebuilt, and the bourgeoisie was permitted a place in the boxes, its place was on the left side of the house,

the right being rigorously reserved for the *Vons*. This continued until 1848; since that year of revolutions the public has had the place it can pay for.

It is quite true the Weimar court but little corresponded with those conceptions of grandeur, magnificence, and historical or political importance, with which the name of court is usually associated. But just as in gambling the feelings are agitated less by the greatness of the stake than by the variations of fortune, so in the social gambling of court intrigue, there is the same ambition and agitation, whether the green cloth be an empire or a duchy. Within its limits Saxe Weimar displayed all that an imperial court displays in larger proportions: it had its ministers, its army, its chamberlains, pages, and sycophants. Court favour, and disgrace, elevated and depressed, as if they had been imperial smiles, or autocratic frowns. A standing army of six hundred men, with cavalry of fifty hussars, had its War Department, with war minister, secretary, and clerk.[1]

As the nobles formed the predominating element of Weimar, we see at once how, in spite of the influence of Karl August, and the remarkable men he assembled round him, no real public for Art could be found there. Some of the courtiers played more or less with Art; some had real feeling for it; but the majority set decided faces against all the *beaux esprits*. When the Duchess Amalia travelled with Merck in 1778, Weimar was loud in anticipatory grumblings: "She will doubtless bring back some *bel esprit* picked up *en route!*" was the common cry. And really when we have learned, as we shall learn in a future chapter, the habits of these *beaux esprits*, and their way of making life "genial," impartiality will force us to confess that

[1] Lest this should appear too ridiculous, I will add that one of the small German princes (the Graf von Limburg Styrum) kept a corps of hussars, which consisted of a colonel, six officers, and two privates!

this imperfect sympathy on the part of the *Vons* was not without its reason.

Not without profound significance is this fact that in Weimar the poet found a Circle, but no Public. To welcome his productions there were friends and admirers; there was no Nation. Germany had no public; nor has it to this day (1854). It was, and is, a collection of cities, not a Nation. To appreciate by contrast the full significance of such a condition we must look at Greece and Rome. There the history of Art tells the same story as is everywhere told by the history of human effort. It tells us that to reach the height of perfection there must be the coöperation of the Nation with individual Genius. Thus also it is necessary for the development of science that science should cease to be the speculation of a few, and become the minister of the many; from the constant pressure of unsatisfied *wants*, science receives its energetic stimulus; and its highest reward is the satisfaction of those wants. In Art the same law holds. The whole Athenian Nation coöperated with its artists; and this is one cause why Athenian Art rose into unsurpassed splendour. Art was not the occupation of a few, ministering to the luxury of a few; it was the luxury of all. Its triumphs were not hidden in galleries and museums; they blazed in the noonday sun; they were admired and criticised by the whole people; and, as Aristotle expressly says, every free citizen was from youth upwards a critic of Art. Sophocles wrote for all Athens, and by all Athens was applauded. The theatre was open to all free citizens. Phidias and Praxiteles, Scopas and Myron, wrought their marvels in brass and marble, as expressions of a national faith, and the delights of a national mind. Temples and market-places, public groves and public walks, were the galleries wherein these sculptors placed their works. The public treasury was liberal in its rewards; and the rivalry of pri-

vate munificence was not displayed to secure works for private galleries, but to enrich the public possessions. In this spirit the citizens of Gnidos chose to continue the payment of an onerous tribute rather than suffer their statue of Venus to quit their city. And when some murmurs rose against the expense which Pericles was incurring in the building of the Parthenon, he silenced those murmurs by the threat of furnishing the money from his private purse, and then placing his name on the majestic work.

Stahr, who has eloquently described the effects of such national coöperation in Art, compares the similar influence of publicity during the Middle Ages, when the great painters and sculptors placed their works in cathedrals, open all day long, — in council-houses and market-places, whither the people thronged, — with the fact that in our day Art finds refuge in the galleries of private persons, or in museums closed on Sundays and holidays.[1]

Nor is this all. The effect of Art upon the Nation is visible in the striking fact that in Greece and Rome the truly great men were crowned by the public, not neglected for any artist who pandered to the fashion and the tastes of the few, or who flattered the *first* impressions of the many. It was young Phidias whom the Athenians chose to carve the statue of Pallas Athene, and to build the Parthenon. Suppose Phidias had been an Englishman, — would he have been selected by government to give the nation a statue of Wellington, or to build the Houses of Parliament? The names most reverenced by contemporaries in Greece, and in Italy, are the names which posterity has declared to be the highest. Necessarily so. The verdict of the public, when that public includes the whole intelligence of the nation, *must* be the correct verdict in Art.

[1] See his "Torso," pp. 147–151.

CHAPTER II.

THE NOTABILITIES OF WEIMAR.

The Dowager Duchess Amalia — Mlle. Göchhausen — Wieland — Einsiedel — Corona Schröter — Bertuch — Musæus — Seckendorf — The Duchess Luise — Karl August — Gräfin Werther — Frau von Stein — Knebel — Herder.

HAVING endeavoured to reconstruct some image of Weimar and its people, we may now descend from generals to particulars, and sketch rapidly the principal figures which will move across that scene, during the first year of Goethe's residence.

The Dowager Duchess Amalia is a very interesting figure. She had the Brunswick blood, with its capriciousness, love of pleasure, and frivolity; but she had also a mind well cultivated, not poorly gifted, and ready in appreciating men of talent. Although a niece of Frederick the Great, she did not follow the princely fashion of the day, and turn her eyes away from German Literature to fix them only upon France. She chose Wieland as the tutor of her son, and made him her own dear friend. Schiller, a rash judge of persons, and not very keen in his perception of woman's character, wrote to Körner, after his first interview with the duchess: "She has made no conquest of me. I cannot like her physiognomy. Her intellect is extremely limited, nothing interests her but what is based on the sensuous: hence the taste she has, or affects to have, for music, painting, and the rest. She is a composer herself, and has set Goethe's 'Erwin and Elmire'

to music. She speaks little; but has, at any rate, the merit of throwing aside all the stiffness of ceremony." Schiller's verdict cannot be accepted by any one who reflects that besides her appreciation of men of talent, who found delight in her society, she learned Greek from Wieland, read Aristophanes, and translated Propertius, was a musical composer, a tolerable judge of art, discussed politics with the Abbé Raynal and Greek and Italian Literature with Villoison; that moreover, with all her multifarious reading and enjoyments, she contrived to superintend the education of her sons, and manage her kingdom with unusual success. This is not to be done by an "extremely limited intellect."

The "sensuous basis" alluded to by Schiller was certainly there. One sees it in her portraits. One sees it also in the glimpses of her joyous, pleasure-loving existence. Biographers and eulogists omit such details; for in general the biographical mind moves only through periods of rhetoric, which may be applied with equal felicity to every prince or princess of whom it is the cue to speak. But it is by such details that the image of the duchess can alone be made a *living* one. Here, for example, is a sketch of her, given by an anonymous traveller:[1] "She is small in stature, good-looking, with a very *spirituelle* physiognomy; she has the Brunswick nose, lovely hands and feet, a light yet princely gait, speaks well but rapidly, and has something amiable and fascinating in her nature. . . . This evening there was a Redoute, tickets one gulden (two francs) each. The court arrived at eight. The duchess was magnificent, *en domino*, and brilliant with jewels. She dances well, lightly, and gracefully. The young princes, who were attired as *Zephyr* and *Amour*, also danced well. The masquerade was very full, lively, and varied. A faro table was laid out: the smallest

[1] Quoted from Bernouilli by Vehse: "Geschichte der Deutschen Höfe," vol. xxviii. p. 60.

stake being half a gulden. The duchess staked dollars and half-louis, played generously and lost. But as she was glad to dance, she did not play long. She danced with every mask who invited her, and stayed till nearly three o'clock, when almost every one had gone home." The same writer also speaks of another Redoute: "The duchess appeared *en reine grecque*, a very beautiful costume, which suited her well. The ball was very brilliant; some students from Jena were there. At the last ball of the season, the duchess sent me one of her own Savoyard dresses, and I was *frisé* and dressed like a woman by the Countess von Görtz's maid. The young count was likewise dressed as a woman, and we went to court so, dined there, and drove thence to the ball, which lasted till six o'clock."

This pleasure-loving duchess, who knew so well how to manage her kingdom, cared little for the dignities of her state. According to Wieland, she lived sometimes in student fashion, especially at Belvedere, where student-songs, not always the most decorous, rang joyously through the moonlit gardens. Driving once with seven friends in a hay-cart from Tiefurt, and overtaken by a storm, she made no more ado but drew over her light clothing Wieland's greatcoat, and in *that* costume drove on.

Her letters, especially those to Goethe's mother, several of which I have seen, have great heartiness, and the most complete absence of anything like formality. In one of them, I remember, she apologises for not having written for some time, not from want of friendship, but lack of news: to show that she has been thinking of *Frau Aja*, she sends her a pair of garters worked by herself. "*Liebe Frau Aja!*" she writes on another occasion, "my joy at the receipt of your letter is not easily described, nor will I attempt it, for true feelings are too sacred to be set down in black and white. You know, dear mother, what you are to me,

and can believe how infinitely your remembrance of me has rejoiced me."[1]

Beside the figure of the Duchess Amalia, we see that of the merry little humpbacked Göchhausen, her maid of honour, by intimates named *Thusnedla*. One sees not why this sprightly *démon de bonne compagnie* should have been named after the wife of Arminius. She was a great favourite with Amalia, with Karl August also, who was constantly engaged in "wit combats" with her, not always of the mildest. She animated society with her devices, and kept up a voluminous correspondence with wits and notabilities in other cities. She was very fond of Goethe, and wrote constantly to his mother. But Karl August was her darling; perhaps because he plagued her so incessantly. As a sample of the lengths to which tricks were carried, consider the following anecdote, which I have from Frau von Goethe, who had it from her father-in-law, an accomplice in the deed. One night as *Thusnelda* came up the stairs leading to her bedroom, her candle was blown out. Not much heeding this, she went on, reached the gallery into which her bedroom opened, and walked on, *feeling* for the door. There is no great difficulty in finding the door of your own room in the dark, yet Thusnelda groped, and groped, and groped in vain: no lock met her hand, a smooth blank wall allowed her hand to pass and repass over it with increasing confusion. Where was the door? Where was she? After groping some time, her perplexity growing into undefined alarm, she descended to the duchess's room; but she found that closed; the duchess was asleep; and her gentle knockings were

[1] Here is another extract, which I leave in the original: "Ach Mutter, Mutter! — Sie errathen wohl meine Gedanken! was macht der alte Vater? er sollte ja nicht wohl seyn. Grüssen sie ihn von mir, und das tausendmal. Leben Sie wohl, beste Mutter; behalten Sie mir lieb und denken fleissig an ihre Freundin. *Amalia.*"

not answered. Up-stairs she went again, again to pass her hands along the wall, but still to find no door. The night was cold and she was half-frozen with cold and fear before the mystery was explained; the duke and Goethe had removed her door, and built up the wall in its place.

Wieland had established his paper, the *Teutsche Mercur*, which was not without its influence. When he ceased to be the prince's tutor, he remained the valued friend of the duchess. He was in all the pleasure parties. So also was Einsiedel, who, at first court page, became chamberlain to the Duchess Amalia in 1776. A jovial, careless epicurean; everywhere known as *l'ami*, from his good nature and eccentricity; filling the mouth of gossip with his extravagances; poet and musician in a small way; actor and inventor of amusements, his name meets us on every page of the Weimar chronicles.

Einsiedel makes us think of Corona Schröter, the *Hofsängerin* (singer to the court — we have no such word, because we have no such thing). Goethe had known this beautiful and accomplished creature while he was a student at Leipsic, and when, shortly after his arrival at Weimar, he made an expedition to Leipsic with the duke, he saw her there again, and induced her to come to Weimar. She was the grace of their private theatricals, and the original personator of Iphigenia.

"Als eine Blume zeigt sie sich der Welt,"

says Goethe of her, in that passage wherein he has immortalised her and Mieding.[1] What a description!

"She, like a flower, opens to the world."

[1] See the poem "Mieding Tod."

Corona painted, sang, played, was learned in music, and declaimed with peculiar elegance, —

"The Muses lavished on her every art."

According to Karl August, she was "marble-beautiful, but marble-cold;" Goethe says of her:

"Und hoch erstaunt, seht Ihr in ihr vereint
Ein Ideal, das Künstlern nur erscheint." [1]

There is a notion current, originating with Riemer, but shown by Schöll to be very improbable, that Goethe had a *liaison* with Corona. I not only agree with Schöll's reasoning, but can corroborate it by the testimony of the Frau von Goethe, who assured me her father-in-law expressly and emphatically told her that he never had a passion for any actress. Varnhagen von Ense suspects that Corona was privately married to Einsiedel; if not, her letters, still extant although inedited, prove that they were on the footing of lovers.

Another chamberlain, poet, and musician was Seckendorf, who translated "Werther" into French, a year after Goethe's arrival ("Les Souffrances du Jeune Werther." Par le B. S. d. S. Erlangen, 1776); and to these gay companions must be added Bode, the translator of Smollett; Bertuch, the treasurer and the translator of Cervantes (whose desire for reputation was greater than his industry, since he induced Batsch to write a "Natural History" in his name, and had to pay a large sum for the expenses, without purchasing anything better than the disrespect attendant on a failure); and Musæus, a passionate lover of gardening, who gave Weimar its pleasant *Erohlung*, and who might have been seen daily crossing the quiet streets with a cup of coffee in one hand, his garden tools in the other,

[1] And gently awed, you feel in her combined
What is Ideal in the artist's mind.

trudging along to that loved retreat. At other times he might be seen plying the ex-drummer, Rüppler, with inspiring *Schnapps* to unlock the casket of his memory, wherein were stored the legends and superstitions of the peasantry which Musæus afterward dressed up in his own style in his celebrated *Volksmärchen*. There was much humour in Musæus; he furnished his Weimar friends with many a pleasant quip and crank. Heinrich Schmidt tells the following. One day Musæus, after a long illness, came to dine with the Schmidts. Every one was amazed at his healthy aspect. He received their reiterated compliments with perfect gravity, till his wife, unable longer to contain herself, confessed that before setting out he had rouged his cheeks![1]

These are the principal figures of Amalia's court. We may now glance at the court of the reigning duke and duchess — Karl August and Luise.

Of the Duchess Luise no one ever speaks but in terms of veneration. She was one of those rare beings who, through circumstances the most trying, as well as through the ordinary details of life, manifest a *noble character*. The Queen of Prussia and the Duchess of Saxe-Weimar are two of the great figures in modern German history; they both opposed the chief man of the age, Napoleon, and were both admired by him for that very opposition. Luise was of a cold temperament, somewhat rigid in her enforcement of etiquette (unlike the dowager), and wore to the last the old costume which had been the fashion in her youth; apt in the early years of her marriage to be a little querulous with her husband, but showing throughout their lives a real and noble friendship for him.

And he was worthy of that friendship, much as his strange, and in many respects opposite nature, may

[1] Schmidt: "Erinnerungen eines weimarischen Veteranen," p. 21.

have tried her. Karl August, whom Frederick the Great pronounced, at fourteen, to be the prince, of all he had seen, who gave the greatest promise, was in truth a very mixed, but very admirable, character. He can afford to be looked at more closely and familiarly than most princes. He was a man whose keen appreciation of genius not only drew the most notable men of the day to Weimar, but whose own intrinsically fine qualities *kept* them there. It is easy for a prince to assemble men of talent. It is not easy for a prince to make them remain beside him, in the full employment of their faculties, and in reasonable enjoyment of their position. Karl August was the prince who with the smallest means produced the greatest result in Germany. He was a man of restless activity. His eye was on every part of his dominions; his endeavours to improve the condition of the people were constant. The recently published correspondence shows how active were his intellectual sympathies. In his tastes no man in Germany was so simple, except his dearest friend, Goethe, with whom, indeed, he had many cardinal points in common. I remember, on first seeing their busts together, being struck with a sort of faint family resemblance between them. Karl August might have been a younger brother, considerably "animalised," but still belonging to the family. They had both, on the paternal side, Thuringian blood in their veins; and in many respects Amalia and Frau Aja were akin. But while Karl August had the active, healthy, sensuous, pleasure-loving temperament of his friend, he wanted the *tact* which never allowed Goethe, except in his wildest period, to overstep limits; he wanted the tenderness and chivalry which made the poet so uniformly acceptable to women. He was witty, but his *bons mots* were mostly of that kind which, repeated after dinner, are not considered fit for drawing-room publication. Very

characteristic is it of him, who had bestowed unusual pains in collecting a *Bibliotheca Erotica*, that when Schiller wrote the "Maid of Orleans," he fancied Schiller was going to give another version of "La Pucelle," and abetted his mistress, the Frau von Heygendorf, in her refusal to play the part of the rehabilitated maiden. He was rough, soldierly, brusque, and imperious. He was at home when in garrison with Prussian soldiers, but out of his element when at foreign courts, and not always at ease in his own. Goethe describes him longing for his pipe at the Court of Brunswick in 1774: "De son coté notre bon Duc s'ennuie terriblement, il cherche un interet, il n'y voudrait pas etre pour rien, la marche très bien mesurée de tout ce qu'on fait ici le gene, il faut qu'il renonce a sa chere pipe et une fee ne pourroit lui rendre un service plus agreeable qu'en changeant ce palais dans une cabane de charbonnier."[1]

In a letter (unprinted), he writes to Goethe, then at Jena, saying he longs to be with him to watch sunrise and sunset, for he can't see the sunset in Gotha, hidden as it is by the crowd of courtiers, who are so *comme il faut*, and know their "fish duty" with such terrible accuracy, that every evening he feels inclined to give himself to the devil. His delight, when not with soldiers, was to be with dogs, or with his poet alone in their simple houses, discussing philosophy, and "talking of lovely things that conquer death." He mingled freely with the people. At Ilmenau he and Goethe put on the miners' dress, descended into the mines, and danced all night with peasant girls. Riding across country, over rock and stream, in manifest peril of his neck; teazing the maids of honour, sometimes carrying this so far as to offend his more princely

[1] "Briefe an Frau von Stein," iii. p. 85. The French is Goethe's, as also the spelling and accentuation, or rather want of accentuation.

wife; wandering alone with his dogs, or with some joyous companion; seeking excitement in wine, and in making love to pretty women, without much respect of station; offending by his roughness and wilfulness, though never *estranging* his friends — Karl August, often grieving his admirers, was, with all his errors, a genuine and admirable character. His intellect was active, his judgment, both of men and things, sound and keen. Once, when there was a discussion about appointing Fichte as professor at Jena, one of the opponents placed a work of Fichte's in the duke's hands, as sufficient proof that *such* a teacher could not hold a chair. Karl August read the book — and appointed Fichte. He had great aims; he also had the despotic will which bends circumstances to its determined issues. "He was always in progress," said Goethe to Eckermann; "when anything failed, he dismissed it at once from his mind. I often bothered myself how to excuse this or that failure; but he ignored every shortcoming in the cheerfullest way, and always went forward to something new."

Such was Karl August, as I conceive him from the letters of the period, and from the reports of those who knew him. Eight years younger than Goethe, he attached himself to him as to a brother. We shall see this attachment and its reciprocal influence in the following pages; clouds sometimes gather, quarrels and dissatisfaction are not absent (from what long friendship are they absent?); but fifty years of mutual service, and mutual affection, proved the genuineness of both their characters.

Among the Weimar notables, Frau von Stein must always have conspicuous eminence. In a future chapter we shall learn more of her. Enough for the present to say that she was *Hofdame* (lady of honour) to the Duchess Amalia, and for many years passionately loved by Goethe. Beside her we may mention

the Countess von Werther, who was to Karl August what the Baroness von Stein was to Goethe. She, as is well known, is the original of the charming countess in "Wilhelm Meister," and her husband was still more eccentric than the eccentric count. It is related of him that once when the duke and some other illustrious guests were in his château, he collected several of his peasants, dressed them in his livery, and blacked their faces to make them pass as negroes!

To close this list we have Major von Knebel, the translator of Lucretius and Propertius, an honest, upright, satirical republican, the intimate friend of Karl August and Goethe, the "philanthropic Timon," as Herder called him, severe against all shams and insincerities, but loving the human nature he declaimed against. As one looks upon his rough, genial, Socratic head, one seems to hear the accents of an independent, thoroughly honest nature give weight to what he says.

I have omitted Herder. He did not come to Weimar till after Goethe, and indeed was drawn thither by Goethe, whose admiration for him, begun at Strasburg, continued unabated. The strange bitterness and love of sarcasm in Herder's nature, which could not repel the young student, did not alter the affection of the man. In one of Goethe's unpublished letters to the Duchess Amalia, there is an urgent appeal on behalf of Herder, whose large family had to be supported on very straitened means; the duke had promised to provide for one of the children, and Goethe writes to Amalia, begging her to do the same for another. No answer coming to this appeal, or at any rate no prompt notice being taken, he writes again more urgently, adding that if she does not provide for the child, he (Goethe), out of his small income, will! And this was at a time when Herder was most bitter against Goethe. Well might Merck exclaim: "No one can withstand the disinterestedness of this man!"

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST WILD WEEKS AT WEIMAR.

THIS was the circle into which Goethe entered in all the splendour of youth, beauty, and fame: Youth, which, according to the fine conception of the Greeks, is "the herald of Venus;" Beauty, which those Greeks adored as the splendour of Truth; and Fame, which has at all times been a halo dazzling to mortal eyes. Thus equipped for conquest, how can we wonder that he conquered? Even Amalia, angry with him for having ridiculed her darling Wieland, could not withstand the magic of his presence. Her love of genius left her no choice. She was fascinated by his wild ways, and by his splendid talents. One moment he startled her with a paradox, the next moment he sprang from his seat, waltzing and whirling round the room with antics which made her scream with laughter. And Wieland? — he was conquered at once. He shall speak for himself, in a letter written after their first interview: "How perfectly I felt, at the first glance, he was a man after my own heart! How I loved the magnificent youth as I sat beside him at table! All that I can say (after more than one crisis which I have endured) is this: since that morning my soul is as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun. . . . I believe the godlike creature will remain longer with us than he intended; and if Weimar *can* do anything, his presence will accomplish it." This is very honourable to Wieland: Nestor gazes with unenvious delight upon the young Achilles. Heroic

eyes are always proud to recognise heroic proportions.

After Wieland and the duchess, the rest were easy to conquer. "He rose like a star in the heavens," says Knebel. "Everybody worshipped him, especially the women." In the costume of his own Werther, which was instantly adopted by the duke, he seemed the ideal of a poet. To moderns there are no very sentimental suggestions in a costume which was composed of blue coat and brass buttons, top-boots, and leather breeches, the whole surmounted by powder and pigtail; but in those days this costume was the suggestion of everything tender and romantic. Werther had consecrated it.[1] The duke not only adopted it, but made all around him adopt it also, sometimes paying the tailor's bill himself. Wieland alone was excepted; he was too old for such masqueradings.

Thoroughly to appreciate the effect of Goethe's influence with women, we must remember the state of feeling and opinion at the time. Those were the days of gallantry, the days of

"Puffs, paints, and patches, powders, billets doux."

The laxity of German morals differed from the more audacious licentiousness of France: it had sentimentalism, in lieu of gaiety and luxuriousness, for its basis. The heart of a French marquise was lost over a supper-table sparkling with champagne and *bons mots;* the heart of a German Grāfin yielded more readily to moonlight, melancholy, and a copy of verses. Wit and audacity were the batteries for a Frenchwoman; the German was stormed with sonnets, and a threat of suicide. For the one, Lothario needed sprightliness and *bon ton;* for the other, turbulent

[1] It should be remembered, that in Germany, at that time, *boots* were only worn in very bad weather; and in the presence of women no one ever appeared except in shoes and silk stockings.

disgust at all social arrangements, expressed in interjectional rhetoric, and a deportment outrageous to all conventions. It is needless to add that marriage was to a great extent what Sophie Arnould with terrible wit called it, — "the sacrament of adultery;" and that on the subject of the sexes the whole tone of feeling was low. Poor, simple, earnest Schiller, whom no one will accuse of laxity, admired "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," and saw no reason why women should not read it; although to our age the infamy of that book is so great as to stamp a brand upon the society which produced and applauded it. Yet even Schiller, who admired this book, was astounded at the condition of women at Weimar. "There is hardly one of them," he writes to Körner, "who has not had a *liaison*. They are all coquettes. . . . One may very easily fall into an 'affair of the heart,' though it will not *last* any time." It was thought, apparently, that since Eros had wings, he must use them — and fly.

With this tone of society we can understand how, as Goethe in after-life confessed to Eckermann, the first years at Weimar were "perplexed with love-affairs." A great admirer of women, and greatly admired by them, it was natural he should fall into their snares. Many charmers are named; among them, Fräulein von Kalb, Corona Schröter, and Kotzebue's sister, Amalia: but I am bound to say that, after the most diligent inquiry, I can find *no* reliable evidence for believing any one of those named to have been really loved by him. We must content ourselves with the fact of his having flirted considerably: making love to every bright pair of eyes which for a moment could make him believe what he said.[1]

For the first few months he gave himself up to the

[1] "Ich log und trog mich bei allen hübschen Gesichtern herum, und hatte den Vortheil immer ein Augenblick zu glauben was ich sagte," he says in a letter to the Frau von Stein, vol. i. p. 5.

excitement of this new life. Among other things he introduced skating. Weimar had hitherto seen no gentleman on the ice; but now, Klopstock having made skating famous by his poetry, Goethe made it fashionable by his daring grace. The duchess soon excelled in the art. Skating on the *Schwansee* became "the rage." Sometimes the banks were illuminated with lamps and torches, and music and fireworks animated the scene. The duchess and ladies, masked as during carnival, were driven in sledges over the noisy ice. "We are somewhat mad here," Goethe writes to Merck, "and play the devil's own game." Wieland's favourite epithet for him was *wüthig* — outrageous, and *wüthig* he was. Strange stories are told of him, now dashing across the ice, now loosening his long hair in Bertuch's room, and, with locks flowing over his shoulders, whirling round in mad Bacchante waltz; and, finally, standing in the Jena market-place with the duke, by the hour together, smacking huge sledge whips for a wager. Imagine a duke and a poet thus engaged in a public market-place!

His constant companion, and in all devilries and dissipation his most jovial associate, was Karl August. All ceremony was laid aside between them. They dined together, often shared the same bedroom, and called each other by the brotherly *thou*. "Goethe will never leave this place again," writes Wieland; "K. A. can no longer swim or wade without him. The court, or rather his *liaison* with the duke, wastes his time, which is really a great pity — and yet — with so magnificent and godlike a creature nothing is ever lost!" Weimar was startled in its more respectable circles by the conduct of these two, and their associates: conduct quite in keeping with the period named "the *genial*." [1] In their orgies they drank wine out of

[1] It is difficult to find an English word to express the German *genial*, which means pertaining to genius. The genial period was

skulls (as Byron and his friends did in their wild days), and in ordinary intercourse exhibited but a very mitigated respect for *meum* and *tuum*, borrowing handkerchiefs and waistcoats which were never returned. The favourite epithet of that day was "infinite:" Genius drank infinitely, loved infinitely, and swallowed infinite sausages.

But the poet's nature soon wearies of such scenes. After some two months of dissipation, in masking, skating, hunting, drinking, and dicing, the want to be once more among simple people and lovely scenes drove him away from Weimar to Waldeck. Amid the crowded tumult of life he ever kept his soul sequestered; and from the hot air of society he broke impatiently away to the serenity of solitude. While on this journey along the pine-clad mountains, there came over him a feeling of the past, in which the image of Lili painfully reappeared.

He was called back to Weimar by the duke, impatient of his absence; and, while debating in his own mind whether he should accept a place there, or return to Frankfort, he began to take his seat, as a guest, in the Privy Council. He had tried the court, and now he was about to try what virtue lay in government. "I am here as if at home," so runs one of his letters, "and the duke daily becomes dearer to me." Indeed, his father's prognostications had failed. The connection between his son and the duke was of a totally different kind from that between Voltaire and Fritz. In secret, Voltaire despised the verses of his patron, as his patron in secret despised the weakness of Voltaire. A few unguarded expressions were enough to snap the link which bound them together; but a lifetime only deepened the regard of Goethe and Karl August. Nor must it be supposed that their

the period when every extravagance was excused on the plea of genius.

friendship was merely that of boon-companions. Both had high aims and strong wills. Prince Hal might recreate himself with Falstaff, Pistol, Bardolph, and the rest; but while chucking Mrs. Quickly under the chin, he knew he was one day to be England's lord. Karl August and Goethe were not the men to lose themselves in the fleeting hours of dissipation; serious, steady business was transacted almost the moment before some escapade. In their retreat at Ilmenau the poet writes:

> "Mein Carl und ich vergessen hier
> Wie seltsam uns ein tiefes Schicksal leitet.
> Und ach! ich fühl's, im Stillen werden wir
> Zu neuen Scenen vorbereitet."

"My Karl and I here forget the strange mysterious Fate which guides us; and I feel that in these quiet moments we are preparing for new scenes." Yes, they learned "in the happy present to forecast the future."

The duke knew what he was doing when he overstepped all precedent, and, in June, 1776, elected Goethe to the post of Geheime Legations Rath, with a seat and voice in the Privy Council, and a salary of twelve hundred thalers. In writing to Goethe's father, the duke intimated that there was absolute feeedom of leaving the service at will, and that, indeed, the appointment was a mere formality, no measure of his affection. "Goethe can have but one position — that of my friend. All others are beneath him."

The post of Geheime Legations Rath at Weimar is not a very magnificent post; and the salary of twelve hundred thalers (about £200) seems still less magnificent when we remember that at that period the King of Prussia gave the Barberini, an Italian dancer, exactly *ten* times the sum. But, such as it was, the appointment created great noise. Weimar was thunderstruck.

The favour shown to Wieland had not passed without scandal; but alarming indeed was this elevation of a Frankfort bourgeois. A poet, who had gone through none of the routine of business, whose life was anything but "respectable," to be lifted suddenly over the plodding heads of legitimate aspirants! If *this* was to be, what reward could meritorious mediocrity expect? what advantage had slowly acquired routiniary knowledge?

So murmured scandalised officials and their friends. At last these murmurs expressed themselves distinctly in the shape of a protest. The duke thought the act worthy of a deliberate justification, and with his own hand added these words to the protocol of the acts of his ministry: "Enlightened persons congratulate me on possessing such a man. His genius and capacity are well known. To employ a man of such stamp in any other functions than those in which he can render available the extraordinary gifts he possesses, is to abuse them. As to the observation that persons of merit may think themselves unjustly passed over: I observe, in the first place, that nobody to my knowledge, in my service, has a right to reckon on an equal degree of favour; and I add that I will never consent to be governed by mere length of service or rotation in my choice of a person whose functions place him in such immediate relation to myself, and are so important to the happiness of my people. In such a case I shall attend to nothing but the degree of confidence I can repose in the person of my choice. The public opinion which perhaps censures the admission of Doctor Goethe to my council without having passed through the previous steps of Amtmann, Professor, Kammerrath, or Regierungsrath, produce no effect on my own judgment. The world forms its opinion on prejudices; but I watch and work — as every man must who wishes to do his duty — not to make a noise, not to attract the

applause of the world, but to justify my conduct to God and my conscience."

Assuredly we may echo M. Dumont's sentiment, that "the prince, who, at nineteen, wrote those words, was no ordinary man." He had not only the eye to see greatness, he had also the strong will to guide his conduct according to his views, untrammelled by routine and formulas. "Say what you will, it is only like can recognise like, and a prince of great capacity will always recognise and cherish greatness in his servants."[1] People saw that the duke was resolved. Murmurs were silenced; or only percolated the gossip of private circles, till other subjects buried them, as all gossip is buried.

The mode of life which the *genial* company led was not only the subject of gossip in Weimar, it grew and grew as scandals grow, *not* losing substance on the way, and reached the ears of distant friends. Thus, only a month before the appointment, Klopstock wrote to Goethe a letter which scandal extorted from friendship.

"HAMBURG, 8th of May, 1776.

"Here is proof of my friendship, dearest Goethe! It is somewhat difficult, I confess, to give it, but it must be given. Do not fancy that I wish to preach to you about your doings; or that I judge harshly of you because you have other views than mine. But your views and mine quite set aside, what will be the inevitable consequence if your present doings continue? The duke, if he continues to drink as he does, instead of strengthening, as he says, his constitution, will ruin it, and will not live long. Young men of powerful constitutions — and that the duke is not — have in this way early perished. The Germans have hitherto, and with justice, complained that their princes would

[1] Goethe, in "Eckermann," iii. p. 232.

have nothing to do with authors. They now gladly make an exception in favour of the duke. But what a justification will not the other princes have, if you continue your present tone? If only that should happen which I feel will happen! The duchess will perhaps still subdue her pain, for she has a strong, manly intellect. But that pain will become grief! And can *that* be so suppressed? Luise's grief, Goethe! . . . I must add a word about Stolberg. He goes to Weimar out of friendship for the duke. He must also live well with him. But how? In *his* style? No! unless he, too, becomes altered, he will go away. And then what remains for him? Not in Copenhagen, not in Weimar. I must write to Stolberg; what shall I say to him? You may please yourself about showing this letter to the duke. I have no objection against it. On the contrary; for he is assuredly not yet arrived at that point when he will not listen to the honest word of a friend. KLOPSTOCK."

Goethe's answer, dated the 21st of May, a fortnight later, therefore, runs thus:

"In future, spare us such letters, dear Klopstock! They do no good, and only breed bad blood. You must feel yourself that I have no answer to make. Either I must, like a schoolboy, begin a *Pater peccavi*, or sophistically excuse, or as an honest fellow defend, and perhaps a mingling of all these might express the truth, but to what purpose? Therefore, not a word more between us on this subject. Believe me, I should not have a moment's rest if I replied to all such admonitions. It pained the duke a moment to think it was Klopstock. He loves and honours you; you know I do the same. Good-bye. Stolberg must come all the same. We are no worse; and with God's help will be better than what he has seen us."

To this Klopstock indignantly replied:

"You have much misunderstood the proof of my friendship, which was great, precisely because of my reluctance to mix myself unasked in the affairs of others. And as you include *all* such letters and *all* such admonitions (your expressions are as strong as that) in the same class with the letter which contained this proof of my friendship, I hereby declare you unworthy of that friendship. Stolberg shall not come, if he listens to me, or rather if he listens to his own conscience."

The breach thus made was never repaired. Stolberg did not come to Weimar; and Klopstock wrote no more.

To return: whatever basis there may have been for the reports which Gossip magnified, certain it is that the duke did not forget the cares of state in these wild orgies. Both he and his friend were very active and very serious. If Weimar, according to the historian of Germany,[1] stands as an illustrious exception among the German courts, it was because Karl August, upheld by his friend, knew how to carry into earnest practice the axiom of Frederick the Great: "A king is but the first of subjects." Goethe's beneficent activity is seen less in such anecdotes as those often cited of his opening a subscription for Bürger to enable him to complete his translation of Homer, and of his relieving Jung Stilling from distress, than in the constant and *democratic* sympathy with which he directed the duke's endeavours.

That he had not the grave deportment of a councillor is very evident. Imagine him as in this anecdote related by Gleim: "Soon after Goethe had written 'Werther' I came to Weimar, and wished to know him. I had brought with me the last 'Musen Almanach,' a literary novelty, and read here and there a poem to the company in which I passed the evening.

[1] Menzel, ccxli.

While I was reading, a young man, booted and spurred, in a short green shooting-jacket thrown open, came in and mingled with the audience. I had scarcely remarked his entrance. He sat down opposite to me and listened attentively. I scarcely knew what there was about him that particularly struck me, except a pair of brilliant black Italian eyes. But it was decreed that I should know more of him.

"During a short pause, in which some gentlemen and ladies were discussing the merits of the pieces I had read, lauding some and censuring others, the gallant young sportsman (for such I took him to be) arose from his chair, and bowing with a most courteous and ingratiating air to me, offered to relieve me from time to time in reading, lest I should be tired. I could do no less than accept so polite an offer, and immediately handed him the book. But oh! Apollo and all ye Muses — not forgetting the Graces — what was I then to hear? At first, indeed, things went on smoothly enough:

> "'Die Zephyr'n lauschten,
> Die Bäche rauschten,
> Die Sonne
> Verbreitet ihr Licht mit Wonne'—

the somewhat more solid, substantial fare of Voss, Stolberg, and Bürger was delivered in such a manner that no one had any reason to complain.

"All at once, however, it was as if some wild and wanton devil had taken possession of the young reader, and I thought I saw the Wild Huntsman bodily before me. He read poems that had no existence in the 'Almanach;' broke out into all possible modes and dialects. Hexameters, iambics, doggerel verses one after another, or blended in strange confusion, came tumbling out in torrents. What wild and humourous fancies did he not combine that evening!

Amidst them came such noble, magnificent thoughts, thrown in detached and flitting, that the authors to whom he ascribed them must have thanked God on their knees if they had fallen upon their desks.

"As soon as the joke was discovered, universal merriment spread through the room. He put everybody present out of countenance in one way or the other. Even my Mæcenasship, which I had always regarded it as a sort of duty to exercise toward young authors, poets, and artists, had its turn. Though he praised it highly on the one side, he did not forget to insinuate on the other that I claimed a sort of property in the individuals to whom I afforded support and countenance. In a little fable composed extempore in doggerel verses, he likened me wittily enough to a worthy and most enduring turkey hen, that sits on a great heap of eggs of her own and other people's, and hatches them with infinite patience; but to whom it sometimes happens to have a chalk egg put under her instead of a real one: a trick at which she takes no offence.

"'That is either Goethe or the Devil!' cried I to Wieland, who sat opposite me. 'Both,' he replied."

It is worth bearing in mind *what* the young Goethe was, that we may the better understand the reason of what he became. No sooner had he commenced his career as politician, than he began to tone down the extravagance of his demeanour; without foregoing any enjoyments, he tried to accord more with those in whom a staid demeanour was necessitated by their more flagging pulses of lethargic life. One month after his appointment Wieland writes of him: "Goethe did in truth, during the first months of his visit here, scandalise most people (never me); but from the moment that he decided on becoming a man of business, he has conducted himself with blameless σωφροσύνη and all worldly prudence." Elsewhere he

says: "Goethe, with all his real and apparent *sauvagerie*, has, in his little finger, more *conduite* and *savoir faire* than all the court parasites, Boniface sneaks, and political cobweb-spinners have in their whole bodies and souls. So long as Karl August lives no power can remove him."

As we familiarise ourselves with the details of this episode, there appears less and less plausibility in the often iterated declamation against Goethe on the charge of his having "sacrificed his genius to the court." It becomes indeed a singularly foolish display of rhetoric. Let us for a moment consider the charge. He had to choose a career. That of poet was then, as it is still, terribly delusive; verse could create fame; but no money; *fama* and *fames* were then, as now, in terrible contiguity. No sooner is the necessity for a career admitted than much objection falls to the ground; for those who reproach him with having wasted his time on court festivities, and the duties of government which others could have done as well, must ask whether he would have *saved* that time had he followed the career of jurisprudence and jostled lawyers through the courts at Frankfort? or would they prefer seeing him reduced to the condition of poor Schiller, wasting so much of his precious life in literary "hack work," translating French books for a miserable pittance? *Time*, in any case, would have been claimed; in return for that given to Karl August, he received, as he confesses in the poem addressed to the duke, "what the great seldom bestow — affection, leisure, confidence, garden, and house. No one have I had to thank but him; and much have I wanted, who, as a poet, ill understood the arts of gain. If Europe praised me, what has Europe done for me? Nothing. Even my works have been an expense to me."

In 1801, writing to his mother on the complaints

uttered against him by those who judged falsely of his condition, he says they only saw what he gave up, not what he gained — they could not comprehend how he grew daily richer, though he daily gave up so much. He confesses that the narrow circle of a burgher life would have ill accorded with his ardent and wide-sweeping spirit. Had he remained at Frankfort, he would have been ignorant of the world. But here the panorama of life was unrolled before him, and his experience was every way enlarged. Did not Leonardo da Vinci spend much of his time charming the court of Milan with his poetry and lute-playing? did he not also spend time in mechanical and hydrostatical labours for the state? No reproach is lifted against his august name; no one cries out against *his* being false to his genius; no one rebukes him for having painted so little at one period. The "Last Supper" speaks for him. Will not "Tasso," "Iphigenia," "Hermann und Dorothea," "Faust," "Meister," and the long list of Goethe's works, speak for *him?*

I have dwelt mainly on the dissipation of his *time*, because the notion that a court life affected his genius by "corrupting his mind" is preposterous. No reader of this biography, it is to be hoped, will fail to see the true relations in which he stood to the duke; how free they were from anything like servility, or suppression of genuine impulse. Indeed one of the complaints against him, according to the unexceptionable authority of Riemer, was that made by the subalterns, "of his not being sufficiently attentive to court etiquette." To say, as Niebuhr says, that the "court was a Delilah to which he sacrificed his locks," is profoundly to misunderstand his genius, profoundly to misread his life. Had his genius been of that stormy kind which produces great Reformers and great Martyrs, — had it been his mission to agitate mankind by words which, reverberating to their inmost recesses, called them to

lay down their lives in the service of an Idea, — had it been his tendency to meditate upon the far-off destinies of man, and sway men by the coercion of grand representative abstractions — then, indeed, we might say his place was aloof from the motley throng, and not in sailing down the swiftly flowing stream to sounds of mirth and music on the banks. But he was not a Reformer, not a Martyr. He was a Poet, whose religion was Beauty, whose worship was of Nature, whose aim was Culture. His mission was to paint Life, and for that it was requisite he should see it. Happier circumstances might indeed have surrounded him, and given him a greater sphere. It would have been very different, as he often felt, if there had been a Nation to appeal to, instead of a heterogeneous mass of small peoples, willing enough to talk of Fatherland, but in nowise prepared to *become* a Nation. There are many other *ifs* in which much virtue could be found; but inasmuch as he could not create circumstances, we must follow his example, and be content with what the gods provided. I do not, I confess, see what other sphere was open to him in which his genius could have been more sacred; but I do see that he built out of circumstances a noble Temple in which the altar-flame burnt with a steady light. To hypothetical biographers be left the task of settling what Goethe *might have been;* enough for us to catch some glimpse of what he was.

"Poetry," says Carlyle, "is the attempt which man makes to render his existence harmonious." It is the flower into which a life expands; but it is not the life itself, with all daily needs, daily struggles, daily prosaisms. The true poet manfully accepts the condition in which destiny has placed him, and therein tries to make his existence harmonious; the sham poet, like a weak workman, fretful over his tools, is loud in his assurances of what he *might* be, were it his lot to live

in other circumstances. Goethe was led by the current of events to a little court, where he was arrested by friendship, love, leisure, and opportunities of a freer, nobler life than Frankfort Law Courts offered him. After much deliberation he chose his career; these pages will show how in it he contrived to be *true* to his genius.

It is scarcely worth while to notice trash about his servility and court slavery. He was not required to be servile; and his nature was as proud as any prince's. "They call me a prince's servant," he said to Eckermann, "and a prince's slave; as if there were any meaning in such words! Whom do I serve? A tyrant — a despot? Do I serve one who lives for his own pleasures at the people's cost? Such princes and such times are, thank God! far enough from us. For more than half a century I have been connected in the closest relations with the grand duke, and for half a century have striven and toiled with him; but I should not be speaking truth were I to say that I could name a single day on which the duke had not his thoughts busied with something to be devised and effected for the good of the country; something calculated to better the condition of each individual in it. As for himself, personally, what has his princely state given him but a burden and a task? Is his dwelling, or his dress, or his table more sumptuously provided than that of any private man in easy circumstances? Go into our maritime cities, and you will find the larder and cellar of every considerable merchant better filled than his. If, then, I am a prince's slave, it is at least my consolation that I am but the slave of one who is himself a slave of the general good."

And to close this subject, read the following passage from Merck's letter to Nicolai — (the Merck who is said by Falk to have spoken so bitterly of the waste

of Goethe's life at Weimar): "I have lately paid Goethe a visit at the Wartburg, and we have lived together for ten days like children. I am delighted to have seen with my own eyes what his situation is. The duke is the best of all, and has a character firm as iron: *I would do, for love of him, just what Goethe does.* . . . I tell you sincerely that the duke is most worthy of respect, and one of the cleverest men that I have ever seen, — and consider that he is a prince, and only twenty years of age!" The long and friendly correspondence Merck kept up with the duke is the best pledge that the foregoing estimate was sincere.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FRAU VON STEIN.

FROM out the many flirtations that amused him, there arises one which grew into predominant importance, swallowing up all the others, and leaping from lambent flame into eager and passionate fire. It was no transitory flash, but a fire which burnt for ten years; and thereby is distinguished from all previous attachments. It is a silver thread woven among the many-coloured threads which formed the tapestry of his life. I will here detach it, to consider it by itself.

The Baroness von Stein, "Hofdame," and wife of the Master of the Horse, was, both by family and position, a considerable person. To us she is interesting as having sprung from a Scotch family, the Irvings of Drum, and as being the sister-in-law to that Baron Imhoff who sold his first wife to Warren Hastings. She was the mother of seven children, and had reached that age which, in fascinating woman, is of perilous fascination — the age of three and thirty. We can understand something of her power if we look at her portrait, and imagine those delicate, coquettish features animated with the lures of sensibility, gaiety, and experience of the world. She sang well, played well, sketched well, talked well, appreciated poetry, and handled sentiment with the delicate tact of a woman of the world. Her pretty fingers had turned over many a serious book; and she knew how to gather honey from weeds. With moral deficiencies, which

this history will betray, she was to all acquaintances a perfectly *charming* woman; and retained her charm even in old age, as many living witnesses testify. Some years after her first acquaintance with Goethe, Schiller thus writes of her to his friend Körner: "She is really a genuine, interesting person, and I quite understand what has attached Goethe to her. Beautiful she can never have been; but her countenance has a soft earnestness, and a quite peculiar openness. A healthy understanding, truth, and feeling lie in her nature. She has more than a thousand letters from Goethe; and from Italy he writes to her every week. They say the connection is perfectly pure and blameless."

It was at Pyrmont that Goethe first saw the Frau von Stein's portrait, and was three nights sleepless in consequence of Zimmermann's description of her. In sending her that flattering detail, Zimmermann added, "He will assuredly come to Weimar to see you." Under her portrait Goethe wrote, "What a glorious poem it would be to see how the world mirrors itself in this soul! She sees the world as it is, and yet withal sees it through the medium of love; hence sweetness is the dominant expression." In her reply to Zimmermann she begs to hear more about Goethe, and intimates her desire to see him. This calls forth a reply that she "has no idea of the danger of his magical presence." Such dangers pretty women gladly run into, especially when, like Charlotte von Stein, they are perfect mistresses of themselves.

With his heart still trembling from the agitations of victory over its desires, after he had torn himself away from Lili, he saw this charming woman. The earth continues warm long after the sun has glided below the horizon; and the heart continues warm some time after the departure of its sun. Goethe was therefore prepared to fall desperately in love with one

who "viewed all things through the medium of love." And there is considerable interest in noting the *kind* of idol now selected. Hitherto he has been captivated only by very young girls, whose youth, beauty, and girlishness were the charms to his wandering fancy; but now he is fascinated by a *woman*, a woman of rank and elegance, a woman of culture and experience, a woman who, instead of abandoning herself to the charm of his affection, knew how, without descending from her pedestal, to keep the flame alive. The others loved him, — showed him their love, — and were forgotten. She contrived to keep him in the pleasant fever of hope; made herself necessary to him; made her love an aim, and kept him in the excitement of one

"Who never is, but always to be blest."

Considering the state of society and opinion at that period, and considering moreover that, according to her son's narrative, her husband was scarcely seen in his own home more than once a week, and that no pretence of affection existed between them, we could understand how Goethe's notorious passion for her excited sympathy in Weimar. Not a word of blame escaped any one on this subject. They saw a lover whose mistress gave him just enough encouragement to keep him eager in pursuit, and who knew how to check him when that eagerness would press on too far. In his early letters to her there are sudden outbreaks and reserves; sometimes the affectionate *thou* escapes, and the next day, perhaps even in the next sentence, the prescribed *you* returns. The letters follow almost daily. So early as January, 1776, this significant phrase escapes: "Adieu, angel! I shall never become more prudent; and have to thank God for it. Adieu! and yet it grieves me that I love thee so — and precisely thee!"

Here is an answer, apparently, to something she has written (for unhappily we have none of *her* letters: she had taken the precaution to demand her letters back from him, and burnt them, carefully preserving his):

"Wherefore must I plague thee! dearest creature! Wherefore deceive myself and plague thee! We can be nothing to each other, and yet are too much to each other. Believe me thou art in all things one with me — but because I see things as they are it makes me mad! Good night, angel, and good morning. I will see thee no more . . . Only . . . Thou knowest all . . . My heart is . . . All I can say is mere folly. In future I shall see thee as men see the stars." A few days after, he writes, "Adieu, dear sister, since it must be so."

I select the following as indicating the tone: "*1st May.* To-day I shall not see you. Your presence yesterday made so wonderful an impression on me, that I know not as yet whether I am well or ill from it. Adieu, dearest lady." "*1st May. Evening.* Thou art right to make me a saint, that is to say, to remove me from thy heart. Holy as thou art, I cannot make *thee* a saint. To-morrow, therefore . . . Well, I will not see thee. Good night!" On the 24th of May, a passionate letter reveals that she had written or spoken to him in a decided tone about "appearances" and "the world:" "So the purest, most beautiful, truest relation I ever had to a woman, except to my sister, *that* also must be disturbed! I was prepared for it; but I suffered infinitely on account of the past and the future, and of the poor child thus consecrated in sorrow. I will not see you; your presence would make me sad. If I am not to live with you, your love will help me no more than the love of those absent, in which I am so rich. *Presence*, in the moment of need, discerns, alleviates, and strengthens. The absent comes

with the hose when the fire is extinguished — and all for the sake of the world! The world, which can be nothing to me, will not let thee be anything to me. You know not what you do. . . . The hand of one in solitude who hears not the voice of love, presses hard where it rests. Adieu, best of women!" "*25th May.* You are always the same, always infinite love and goodness. Forgive me if I make you suffer. I will learn to bear my suffering alone." "*2d June.* Adieu. Love me as ever, I will come seldomer and write seldomer." "*4th June.* Here, dear lady, is the tribute. I will see if I can keep my resolution not to come. You are not quite safe with me. Yesterday there were again some moments in which I really felt how I love you." "*6th June.* So you could do me the unkindness of remaining away, yesterday! Truly what you do must be right in my eyes! But it made me sad." "*7th June.* You are a darling to have told me all. When one loves, one should tell everything. Dearest angel, and I have again three words which will set you at rest, but only words from me to thee! I shall come to-day."

She was forced to quit Weimar for awhile. "Dearest lady," he writes, "I dare not think you are going away on Tuesday, and that you will be away from me six months. For what avails all else? It is *presence* alone which influences, consoles, and edifies! even though it sometimes torments — torment is the sun-shower of love."

Here is a curious passage: "Last night as I lay in bed half-asleep, Philip brought me a letter; half stupefied, I read — that Lili is betrothed! I turn round and fall asleep. How I pray that fate may act so by me in the right moment. Dear angel, good night." One more extract. "Oh! you have a way of giving pain which is like that of destiny, which admits of no complaint, however it may grieve."

In a little while the tone grows more subdued. Just as the tone of his behaviour in Weimar, after the first wild weeks, became softened to a lower key, so in these letters we see, after awhile, fewer passionate outbreaks, fewer interjections, and no more *thous*. But love warms them still. The letters are incessant, and show an incessant preoccupation. Certain sentimental readers will be shocked, perhaps, to find so many details about eating and drinking; but when they remember Charlotte cutting bread and butter, they may understand the author of "Werther" eloquently begging his beloved to send him a sausage.

The visitor may still read the inscription, at once homage and souvenir, by which Goethe connected the happy hours of love with the happy hours of active solitude passed in his garden-house in the park. Fitly is the place dedicated to the Frau von Stein. The whole spot speaks of her. Here are the flower-beds from which almost every morning flowers, with the dew still on them, accompanied letters not less fresh and beautiful, to greet the beloved. Here are the beds from which came the asparagus he was so proud to send her. Here is the orchard in which grew the fruit he so often sent. Here is the room in which he dreamt of her; here the room in which he worked while her image hovered round him. The house stands within twenty minutes' walk from the house where she lived, separated by clusters of noble trees.

If the reader turns back to the description of the park, he will ascertain the position of this *Gartenhaus*. Originally it belonged to Bertuch. One day, when the duke was earnestly pressing Goethe to take up his residence at Weimar, the poet (who then lived in the Jägerhaus in the Belvedere Allée), undecided as to whether he should go or remain, let fall, among other excuses, the want of a quiet bit of land, where his taste for gardening could be indulged. "Bertuch, for ex-

ample, is very comfortable; if I had but such a piece of ground as that!" Hereupon the duke, very characteristically, goes to Bertuch, and without periphrasis, says, "I must have your garden." Bertuch starts: "But your Highness —" "But me no buts," replies the young prince; "I can't help you. Goethe wants it, and unless we give it to him we shall never keep him here; it is the only way to secure him." This reason would probably not have been so cogent with Bertuch had not the duke excused the despotism of his act by giving in exchange more than the value of the garden. It was at first only lent to Goethe; but in 1780 it was made a formal gift.

It is charmingly situated, and, although of modest pretensions, is one of the most enviable houses in Weimar. The Ilm runs through the meadows which front it. The town, although so near, is completely shut out from view by the thick-growing trees. The solitude is absolute, broken only by the occasional sound of the church clock, the music from the barracks, and the screaming of the peacocks spreading their superb beauty in the park. So fond was Goethe of this house, that winter and summer he lived there for seven years; and when, in 1782, the duke made him a present of the house in the *Frauenplan*, he could not prevail upon himself to sell the Gartenhaus, but continued to make it a favourite retreat. Often when he chose to be alone and undisturbed, he locked all the gates of the bridges which led from the town to his house, so that, as Wieland complained, no one could get at him except by aid of picklock and crowbar.

It was here, in this little garden, he studied the development of plants, and made many of those experiments and observations which have given him a high rank among the discoverers in Science. It was here the poet escaped from court. It was here the lover was happy in his love. How modest this

garden-house really is; how far removed from anything like one's preconceptions of it! It is true, that the position is one which many a rich townsman in England would be glad of as the site for a handsome villa: a pretty orchard and garden on a gentle slope; in front, a good carriage road, running beside a fine meadow, encircled by the stately trees of the park. But the house, a half-pay captain with us would consider a miserable cottage; yet it sufficed for the court favourite and minister. Here the duke was constantly with him; sitting up till deep in the night, in earnest discussion; often sleeping on the sofa instead of going home. Here both duke and duchess would come and dine with him, in the most simple unpretending way; the whole banquet in one instance consisting, as we learn from a casual phrase in the Stein correspondence, of "a beer soup and a little cold meat."[1]

There is something very pleasant in noticing these traits of the simplicity which was then practised. The duke's own hut — the *Borkenhaus* — has already been described (page 277). The hut, for it was nothing else, in which Goethe lived in the Ilmenau mountains, and the more than bourgeois simplicity of the Garden House, make us aware of one thing among others, namely, that if he sacrificed his genius to a court, it assuredly was not for loaves and fishes, not for luxury and material splendour of any kind. Indeed, such things had no temptation to a man of his simple tastes. "Rich in money," he writes to his beloved, "I shall never become; but, therefore, all the richer in Confidence, Good Name, and Influence over the minds of men."

It was his love of Nature which made him so indifferent to luxury. That love gave him simplicity and hardihood. In many things he was unlike his nation:

[1] Compare also the "Briefwechsel zwischen Karl August und Goethe," i. 27.

notably in his voluntary exposure to two bright, wholesome things, which to his contemporaries were little less than bugbears — I mean, fresh air and cold water. The nation which consented to live in the atmosphere of iron stoves, tobacco, and bad breath, and which deemed a pint of water all that man could desire for his ablutions, must have been greatly perplexed at seeing Goethe indulge in fresh air and cold water as enjoyingly as if they were vices.

Two anecdotes will bring this contrast into relief. So great was the German reluctance to even a necessary exposure to the inclemencies of open-air exercise, that historians inform us "a great proportion, especially among the learned classes, employed a miserable substitute for exercise in the shape of a machine, by means of which they comfortably took their dose of movement without leaving their rooms."[1] And Jacobs, in his "Personalien," records a fact which, while explaining how the above-named absurdity could have gained ground, paints a sad picture of the life of German youth in those days. Describing his boyish days at Gotha, he says: "Our winter pleasures were confined to a not very spacious courtyard, exchanged in summer for a little garden within the walls, which my father hired. *We took no walks. Only once a year, when the harvest was ripe, our parents took us out to spend an evening in the fields.*"[2] So little had Goethe of this prejudice against fresh air, that when he began the rebuilding of his Gartenhaus, instead of sleeping at an hotel or at the house of a friend, he lived there through all the building period; and we find him writing, "At last I have a window once more, and can make a fire." On the 3d of May he writes, "Good morning: here is

[1] Biederman: "Deutschland's Politische, Materielle und Sociale Zustände," 1, p. 343.

[2] Quoted by Mrs. Austin: "Germany from 1760 to 1814," p. 85.

asparagus. How were you yesterday? Philip baked me a cake; and thereupon, wrapped up in my blue cloak, I laid myself on a dry corner of the terrace and slept amid thunder, lightning, and rain, so gloriously that my bed was afterward quite disagreeable." On the 19th he writes, "Thanks for the breakfast. I send you something in return. Last night I slept on the terrace, wrapped in my blue cloak, awoke three times, at 12, 2, and 4, and *each time there was a new splendour in the heavens.*" There are other traces of this tendency to bivouac, but these will suffice. He bathed not only in the morning sunlight, but also in the Ilm, when the moonlight shimmered on it. Always in the free air seeking vigour —

> "Tauche mich in die Sonne früh
> Bad' ab im Monde des Tages Müh'."

The duke shared his love of bathing, which December's cold could not arrest. It was here Goethe learned to swim by the aid of "corks" (which so often served him as an illustration), and no inclemency of the weather could keep him out of the water. The fascination of water luring into its treacherous depths, is wonderfully expressed by him in that ballad, which every one knows, and almost every one tries to translate. I have tried my hand in this version:

THE FISHERMAN.

"The water rushed, the water swelled:
A fisherman sat by,
And gazed upon his dancing float
With tranquil-dreaming eye.
And as he sits, and as he looks,
The gurgling waves arise:
A maid, all bright with water-drops,
Stands straight before his eyes.

"She sang to him, she spake to him:
'My fish why dost thou snare
With human wit and human guile
Into the killing air?
Couldst see how happy fishes live
Under the stream so clear,
Thyself would plunge into the stream,
And live for ever there.

"'Bathe not the lovely sun and moon
Within the cool deep sea,
And with wave-breathing faces rise
In twofold witchery?
Lure not the misty heaven-deeps
So beautiful and blue?
Lures not thine image, mirrored in
The fresh eternal dew?'

"The water rushed, the water swelled,
It clasped his feet, I wis;
A thrill went through his yearning heart
As when two lovers kiss!
She spake to him, she sang to him:
Resistless was her strain;
Half drew him in, half lured him in;
He ne'er was seen again."

One night, while the moon was calmly shining on our poetical bather, a peasant, returning home, was in the act of climbing over the bars of the floating bridge; Goethe espied him, and moved by that spirit of devilry which so often startled Weimar, he gave utterance to wild sepulchral tones, raised himself half out of water, ducked under, and reappeared howling, to the horror of the aghast peasant, who, hearing such sounds issue from a figure with long floating hair, fled as if a legion of devils were at hand. To this day there remains an ineradicable belief in the existence of the water-sprite who howls among the waters of the Ilm.

CHAPTER V.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

"LET my present life," writes Goethe to Lavater, January, 1777, "continue as long as it will, at any rate I have heartily enjoyed a genuine experience of the variegated throng and press of the world — Sorrow, Hope, Love, Work, Want, Adventure, Ennui, Impatience, Folly, Joy, the Expected, and the Unknown, the Superficial and the Profound — just as the dice threw — with fêtes, dances, sledgings — adorned in silk and spangles — a marvellous *ménage!* And withal, dear brother, God be praised, in myself and in my real aims in life I am quite happy."

"Goethe plays indeed a high game at Weimar," writes Merck, "but lives at court after his own fashion. The duke is an excellent man, let them say what they will, and in Goethe's company will become still more so. What you hear is court scandal and lies. It is true the intimacy between master and servant is very great, but what harm is there in that? *Were Goethe a nobleman it would be thought quite right.* He is the soul and direction of everything, and all are contented with him, because he serves many and injures no one. Who can withstand the disinterestedness of this man?"

He had begun to make his presence felt in the serious department of affairs; not only in educating the duke who had chosen him as his friend, but also

in practical ameliorations. He had induced the duke to call Herder to Weimar, as *Hof Prediger* (court chaplain) and *General-superintendent;* whereat Weimar grumbled, and gossiped, setting afloat stories of Herder having mounted the pulpit in boots and spurs. Not content with these efforts in a higher circle, Goethe sought to improve the condition of the people; and among his plans we note one for the opening of the Ilmenau mines, which for many years had been left untouched.

Amusement went hand in hand with business. Among the varied amusements, one, which greatly occupied his time and fancy, deserves a more special notice, because it will give us a glimpse of the court, and will also show us how the poet turned sport into profit. I allude to the private theatricals which were started shortly after his arrival. It should be premised that the theatre was still in ashes from the fire of 1774.[1] Seyler had carried his troupe of players elsewhere; and Weimar was without its stage. Just at this period private theatricals were even more "the rage" than they are in England at present. In Berlin, Dresden, Frankfort, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Fulda, were celebrated amateur troupes. In Würtzburg, for a long while, a *noble* company put on sock and buskin; in Eisenach, prince and court joined in the sport. Even the universities, which in earlier times had, from religious scruples, denounced the drama, now forgot their antagonism, and in Vienna, Halle, Göttingen, and Jena, allowed the students to have private stages.

The Weimar theatre surpassed them all. It had its poets, its composers, its scene-painters, its costumiers. Whoever showed any talent for recitation, singing, or dancing, was pressed into service, and had to work as hard as if his bread depended on it. The almost daily

[1] On the state of the theatre before Goethe's arrival and subsequently, see Pasqué, "Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar," 1863.

rehearsals of drama, opera, or ballet, occupied and delighted men and women glad to have something to do. The troupe was distinguished: the Duchess Amalia, Karl August, Prince Constantine, Bode, Knebel, Einsiedel, Musæus, Seckendorf, Bertuch, and Goethe; with Corona Schröter, Kotzebue's sister Amalia, and Fräulein Göchhausen. These formed a curious strolling company, wandering from Weimar to all the palaces in the neighbourhood — Ettersburg, Tiefurt, Belvedere, even to Jena, Dornburg, and Ilmenau. Often did Bertuch, as Falk tells us, receive orders to have the sumpter wagon, or travelling kitchen, ready for the early dawn, when the court would start with its wandering troupe. If only a short expedition was intended, three sumpter asses were sufficient. If it was more distant, over hill and dale, far into the distant country, then indeed the night before was a busy one, and all the ducal pots and pans were in requisition. Such boiling and stewing, and roasting! such slaughter of capons, of pigeons, and fowls! The ponds of the Ilm were dragged for fish; the woods were robbed of their partridges; the cellars were lightened of their wines. With early dawn rode forth the merry party, full of anticipation, wild with animal spirits. On they went through solitudes, the grand old trees of which were wont only to see the soaring hawk poised above their tops, or the wild-eyed deer bounding past the hut of the charcoal-burner. On they went: youth, beauty, gladness, and hope, a goodly train, like that which animated the forest of Ardennes, when "under the shade of melancholy boughs" the pensive duke and his followers forgot awhile their cares and "painted pomps."

Their stage was soon arranged. At Ettersburg the traces are still visible of this forest stage, where, when weather permitted, the performances took place. A wing of the château was also made into a theatre. But the open-air performances were most relished.

To rehearsals and performances in Ettersburg the actors, sometimes as many as twenty, were brought in the duke's equipages; and in the evening, after a joyous supper, often enlivened with songs, they were conducted home by the duke's body-guard of Hussars, bearing torches. It was here they performed Einsiedel's opera, "The Gipsies," with wonderful illusions. Several scenes of "Götz von Berlichingen" were woven into it. The illuminated trees, the crowd of gipsies in the wood, the dances and songs under the blue, starlit heavens, while the sylvan bugle sounded from afar, made up a picture the magic of which was never forgotten. On the Ilm also, at Tiefurt, just where the river makes a beautiful bend round the shore, a regular theatre was constructed. Trees, and other poetical objects, such as fishermen, nixies, water-spirits, moon and stars, — all were introduced with effect.

The performances were of the same varied nature as the theatres. Sometimes French comedies, sometimes serious works of art, often broad extravaganzas. Occasionally they played charades, in which the plan was prearranged, but the dialogue left to the improvisation of the actors. Once when an actor grew wordy and wandering, they rushed on the stage, carried him off by force, and informed the audience (as if it were part of the piece) that he was suddenly taken ill. The records of that time have preserved for us the outline of a magical piece, got up in honour of Goethe's birthday — "Minerva's Birth, Life, and Deeds." It was a magnificent magic-lantern piece, with music by Seckendorf. The characters were not represented by puppets, but by gentlemen and ladies, in the so-called *Petit Colisée* at Tiefurt. On the site of this new temple of the Muses stood formerly a solitary wood hut. In the representation every appliance was sought after which external effect demanded. It took place behind a large white curtain, *en silhouette*. In the "Histoire

Universelle des Théâtres" there is only one example of a theatrical representation of this kind, namely, the drama which Chiron presented to his pupil, Achilles, and which had the same object and significance as the Tiefurt drama. In antiquity such representations were called *umbræ palpitantes*, by moderns *ombres chinoises*. They were introduced at the Weimar court about this time, by the Duke George of Saxe-Meiningen, and were very much in favour there.

The subject of this Tiefurt piece is remarkable: Jupiter (in the person of the painter Kraus, on whose shoulders was placed a colossal pasteboard head), in order to frustrate the prophecy that on the *accouchement* of his wife Metis, he would be thrust from the throne, has devoured Metis. Thereupon he suffers terrible pains in the head; Ganymede, hovering behind him on a great eagle, offers him the cup of nectar: the pains of the Thunderer increase visibly, and Ganymede soars into the air to fetch Æsculapius and Vulcan. Æsculapius seeks in vain to cure his master. A Cyclops, who is summoned, bleeds him at the nose, without effect. Then comes the powerful Vulcan (represented by the young Duke Karl August), who, holding in one hand his hammer, in the other a great iron bar, and encircled by an apron, approaches his suffering father, and with one good stroke of the hammer splits his divine skull, out of which proceeds Minerva, the goddess of wisdom (represented by Corona Schröter), at first quite a small figure, but by means of appropriate machinery becoming larger and larger every moment, till at last the whole of her tall, slim form is revealed, enveloped in light gauze. She is received by Father Zeus in the most friendly manner; and rich gifts are presented to her by all the gods. She is furnished with a helmet, an ægis, and a lance; Ganymede places Jupiter's owl at her feet, and amidst music and choral singing the curtain falls.

In the third and last act, the poet departed from the materials of the myth. He made the new-born goddess read in the Book of Fate, and find there the *28th of August*[1] marked as one of the most fortunate days. She says that "on that day three-and-thirty years ago a man was given to the world, who will be honoured as one of the best and wisest." Then appears a winged genius in the clouds, bearing Goethe's name. Minerva crowns this name, and at the same time dedicates to it the divine gifts which have been immemorially the tokens of her favour; for example, the golden lyre of Apollo, and the flowery wreath of the Muses. The whip of Momus alone, on the thong of which stood the word "Aves," is laid aside and rejected by the goddess; while the names Iphigenia and Faust appear in the clouds in fire transparencies. At the close, Momus advances unabashed, and brings the reprobated symbol of his Art as a present to Goethe.

Such was the opening and dedication of the new Weimar-Tiefurt Court Theatre. It is obvious that the piece was intended purely to celebrate the birthday of Goethe, the director of this social theatre; and gives us not a bad idea of the ingenuity and pains bestowed upon these amusements. The reader will not fail to notice that, if Goethe prepared fêtes for the birthday of his duchess, Weimar also prepared fêtes for the birthday of its poet.

Another favourite magic-lantern piece was "King Midas," which is mentioned in Amalia's letters to Knebel in the year 1781. But the best known of the Tiefurt dramas is Goethe's operetta "Die Fischerin," performed in the summer of 1782. The charming text, beginning with the famous Erl-König, is preserved in Goethe's works. The piece was represented in the Tiefurt park, partly on the bank of the Ilm near the bridge, partly on the Ilm itself, which

[1] Goethe's birthday.

was illuminated with numerous torches and lamps. Under lofty alders against the river were placed scattered huts of fishermen; nets, boats, and fishing implements stood around. On Dorten's (Corona Schröter) hearth fire was burning. At the moment in which the fishermen who had been called together lighted their strips of wood and torches, and spread themselves with their brilliant lights in boats and on the banks of the river, to search for the lost maiden, the light flashed suddenly up from the necks of land which stretched forward into the Ilm, illuminating the nearest objects, and showing their reflection in the water, while the more distant groups of trees and hills lay in deep night. The spectators had assembled in great numbers, and as they crowded on the wooden bridge, the better to catch the magical effect of the illumination on the water, their weight crushed the bridge in, and the eager gazers fell into the river. No one, however, was injured. The involuntary bathers were heartily laughed at, and the accident was regarded as an amusing interlude.

I find further that when a travesty of the "Birds" of Aristophanes was performed at Ettersburg, the actors were all dressed in real feathers, their heads completely covered, though free to move. Their wings flapped, their eyes rolled, like birds in a pantomime. It is right to add, that besides these extravagances and *ombres chinoises*, there were very serious dramatic efforts: among them we find Goethe's second dramatic attempt, "Die Mitschuldigen," which was thus cast:

Alceste	Goethe
Söller	Bertuch
Der Wirth	Musäus
Sophie	Corona Schröter.

Another play was the "Geschwister," written in three evenings, it is said, but without evidence, out of love

for the sweet eyes of Amalia Kotzebue, sister of the dramatist, then a youth. Kotzebue thus touches the point in his "Memoirs:" "Goethe had at that time just written his charming piece, 'Die Geschwister.' It was performed at a private theatre at Weimar, he himself playing William and my sister Marianne, while to me — yes to me — was allotted the important part of postilion! My readers may imagine with what exultation I trod the stage for the first time before the mighty public itself." Another piece was Cumberland's "West Indian," in which the duke played Major O'Flaherty; Eckhoff (the great actor) the Father; and Goethe Belcour, dressed in a white coat with silver lace, blue silk vest, and blue silk knee breeches, in which they say he looked superb.

While mentioning these I must not pass over the "Iphigenia" (then in prose), which was thus cast:

Orestes	Goethe
Pylades	Prince Constantine
Thoas	Knebel
Arkas	Seidler
Iphigenia	Corona Schröter.

"Never shall I forget," exclaims Doctor Hufeland, "the impression Goethe made as Orestes, in his Grecian costume; one might have fancied him Apollo. Never before had there been seen such union of physical and intellectual beauty in one man!" His acting, as far as I can learn, had the ordinary defects of amateur acting; it was impetuous and yet stiff, exaggerated and yet cold; and his fine sonorous voice displayed itself without nice reference to shades of meaning. In comic parts, on the other hand, he seems to have been excellent; the broader the fun, the more at home he felt; and one can imagine the rollicking animal spirits with which he animated the Marktschreier in the "Plundersweilern;" one can picture him in the extrav-

agance of the "Geflickte Braut,"[1] giving vent to his sarcasm on the "sentimental" tone of the age, ridiculing his own "Werther," and merciless to "Woldemar."[2]

I have thus brought together, irrespective of dates, the scattered indications of these theatrical amusements. How much enjoyment was produced by them! what social pleasure! and what endless episodes, to which memory recurred in after times, when they were seated round the dinner-table! Nor were these amusements profitless. "Wilhelm Meister" was designed and partly written about this period; and the reader, who knows Goethe's tendency to make all his works biographical, will not be surprised at the amount of theatrical experience which is mirrored in that work; nor at the earnestness which is there made to lurk beneath amusement, so that what to the crowd seems no more than a flattery of their tastes, is to the man himself a process of the highest culture.

Boar-hunting in the light of early dawn, sitting in the middle of the day in grave diplomacy and active council, rehearsing during the afternoon, and enlivening the evening with grotesque serenades or torchlight sledgings — thus passed many of his days; not to mention flirtations, balls, masquerades, concerts, and verse-writing. The muse was, however, somewhat silent, though "Hans Sachs's poetische Sendung," "Lili," some charming lyrics, and the dramas and operas written for the occasion, forbid the accusation of idleness. He was storing up materials. "Faust," "Egmont," "Tasso," "Iphigenia," and "Meister" were germinating.

The muse was silent, but was the soul inactive?

[1] Published, under a very mitigated form, as the "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit." See the next chapter for further notice of this piece.

[2] Jacobi and Wieland were both seriously offended with his parodies of their writings; but both soon became reconciled to him.

As these strange and variegated scenes passed before his eyes, was he a *mere* actor, and not also a spectator? Let his works answer. To some indeed it has seemed as if in thus lowering great faculties to the composition of slight operas and festive pieces, Goethe was faithless to his mission, false to his own genius. This is but a repetition of Merck's exclamation against "Clavigo," and may be answered as that was answered. Herder thought that the Chosen One should devote himself to great works. This is the objection of a man of letters who can conceive no other aim than the writing of books. But Goethe needed to *live* as well as to write. Life is multiplied and rendered infinite by Feeling and Knowledge. He sought both to feel and to know. The great works he has written — works high in conception, austerely grand in execution, the fruits of earnest toil and lonely self-seclusion — ought to shield him *now* from any charge of wasting his time on frivolities, though to Herder and Merck such a point of view was denied.

It was his real artistic nature, and genuine poetic mobility, that made him scatter with a prodigal hand the trifles which distressed his friends. Poetry was the melodious voice breathing from his entire manhood; it was not a profession, but an impulse; the sounding chords of his poetic nature vibrated to every touch, grave and stately, sweet and impassioned, delicate and humourous. He wrote not for Fame; he wrote not for pence; he wrote poetry because he had *lived* it; and "sang as the bird sings on its bough." He sang whatever at the moment filled him with delight — now thrilling a careless snatch of melody, now a simple ballad, now a majestic hymn ascending from the depths of his soul on incense-bearing rhythms, and now a grave, quiet chaunt, slow with its rich burden of meanings. Men in whom the productive activity is great cannot be restrained from throwing off trifles,

as the plant throws off buds beside the expanded flowers. Michael Angelo carved the Moses, and painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, but did he not also lend his master-hand to the cutting of graceful cameos ?

CHAPTER VI.

MANY-COLOURED THREADS.

HITHERTO our narrative of this Weimar period has moved mainly among generalities, for only by such means could a picture of this episode be painted. Now, as we advance further, it is necessary to separate the threads of his career from those of others with which it was interwoven.

It has already been noted, that he began to tire of the follies and extravagances of the first months. In this year, 1777, he was quiet in his garden-house, occupied with drawing, poetry, botany, and love for the Frau von Stein. Love and ambition were the guides which led him through the labyrinth of the court. Amid those motley scenes, amid those swiftly succeeding pleasures, voices, sorrowing voices of the Past made themselves audible above the din, and recalled the vast hopes which once had given energy to his aims; and these reverberations of an ambition once so cherished, arrested and rebuked him, like the deep murmurs of some solemn bass moving slowly through the showering caprices of a sportive melody. No soul can long endure uninterrupted gaiety and excitement. Weary intervals will occur: the vulgar soul fills these intervals with the long lassitude of its ennui; the noble soul with reproaches at the previous waste of irrevocable hours.

The quiet influence exercised by the Frau von Stein is visible in every page of his letters. As far as I can

divine the state of things in the absence of her letters, I fancy she coquetted with him; when he showed any disposition to throw off her yoke, when his manner seemed to imply less warmth, she lured him back with tenderness; and vexed him with unexpected coldness when she had drawn him once more to her feet. "You reproach me," he writes, "with alternations in my love. It is not true; but it is well that I do not every day feel how utterly I love you." Again: "I cannot conceive why the main ingredients of your feeling have lately been Doubt and want of Belief. But it is certainly true that one who did not hold firm his affection might have that affection doubted away, just as a man may be persuaded that he is pale and ill." That she tormented him with these coquettish doubts is but too evident; and yet when he is away from her she writes to tell him that he is become dearer! "Yes, my treasure!" he replies, "I believe you when you say your love increases for me during absence. When away, you love the idea you have formed of me; but when present, that idea is often disturbed by my folly and madness. . . . I love you better when present than when absent: hence I conclude my love is truer than yours." At times he seems himself to have doubted whether he really loved her, or only loved the delight of her presence.

With these doubts mingles another element, his ambition to do something which will make him worthy of her. In spite of his popularity, in spite of his genius, he has not subdued her heart, but only agitated it. He endeavours, by *devotion*, to succeed. Thus love and ambition play into each other's hands, and keep him in a seclusion which astonishes and pains several of those who could never have enough of his company.

In the June of this year his solitude was visited by one of the agitations he could least withstand — the

death of his only sister, Cornelia. *Sorrows and dreams*, is the significant entry of the following day in his journal.

It was about this time that he undertook the care of Peter Imbaumgarten, a Swiss peasant boy, the protégé of his friend Baron Lindau. The death of the baron left Peter once more without protection. Goethe, whose heart was open to all, especially to children, gladly undertook to continue the baron's care; and as we have seen him sending home an Italian image-boy to his mother at Frankfort, and Wilhelm Meister undertaking the care of Mignon and Felix, so does this "cold" Goethe add love to charity, and become a father to the fatherless.

The autumn tints were beginning to mingle their red and yellow with the dark and solemn firs of the Ilmenau mountains. Goethe and the duke could not long keep away from the loved spot, where poetical and practical schemes occupied the day, and many a wild prank startled the night. There they danced with peasant girls till early dawn; one result of which was a swelled face, forcing Goethe to lay up.

On his return to Weimar he was distressed by the receipt of one of the many letters which "Werther" drew upon him. He had made sentimentality poetical; it soon became the fashion. Many were the melancholy youths who poured forth their sorrows to him, demanding sympathy and consolation. Nothing could be more antipathetic to his clear and healthy nature. It made him ashamed of his "Werther." It made him merciless to all Wertherism. To relieve himself of the annoyance, he commenced the satirical extravaganza of the "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit." Very significant, however, of the unalterable kindliness of his disposition is the fact, that although these sentimentalities had to him only a painful or a ludicrous aspect, he did not suffer his repugnance to the malady

to destroy his sympathy for the patient. There is a proof of this in the episode he narrates of his Harz journey, made in November and December of this year,[1] known to most readers through his poem, "Die Harzreise im Winter." The object of that journey was twofold: to visit the Ilmenau mines, and to visit an unhappy misanthrope whose Wertherism had distressed him. He set out with the duke, who had arranged a hunting party to destroy "a great thing of a boar" then ravaging the country round Eisenach; but, although setting out with them, he left them *en route*, for purposes of his own.

Through hail, frost, and mud, lonely, yet companioned by great thoughts, he rode along the mountainous solitudes, and reached at last the *Brocken*. A bright sun shone on its eternal snows as he mounted and looked down upon the cloud-covered Germany beneath him. Here he felt the air of freedom swell his breast. The world with its conventions lay beneath him; the court with its distractions was afar; and the poet stood amidst these snowy solitudes communing with that majestic spirit of beauty which animates Nature. There, —

> ". . . high above the misty air
> And turbulence of murmuring cities vast," —[2]

he was lost in reveries of his future life:

> "Dem Geier gleich
> Der auf schweren Morgenwolken,
> Mit sanftem Fittig ruhend,
> Nach Beute schaut,
> Schwebe mein Lied."

This image of the hawk poised above the heavy morning clouds looking for his prey, is (I adopt his

[1] And *not* in 1776, as he says; that date is disproved by his letters to the Frau von Stein.

[2] Wordsworth.

own explanation) that of the poet on the snowy heights looking down on the winter landscape, and with his mind's eye seeking amidst the perplexities of social life for some object worthy of his muse.

Writing to his beloved, he speaks of the good effect this journeying amid simple people (to whom he is only known as Herr Weber, a landscape-painter) has upon his imagination. It is like a cold bath, he says. And *à propos* of his disguise, he remarks how very *easy* it is to be a rogue, and what advantages it gives you over simple honest men to assume a character that is not your own.

But now let us turn to the *second* object of his journey. The letter of the misanthrope just alluded to was signed Plessing, and dated from Wernigerode. There was something remarkable in the excess of its morbidity, accompanied by indications of real talent. Goethe did not answer it, having already hampered himself in various ways by responding to such extraneous demands upon his sympathy; another and more passionate letter came imploring an answer, which was still silently avoided. But now the idea of personally ascertaining what manner of man his correspondent was made him swerve from his path; and under his assumed name he called on Plessing.

On hearing that his visitor came from Gotha, Plessing eagerly inquired whether he had not visited Weimar, and whether he knew the celebrated men who lived there. With perfect simplicity Goethe replied that he did, and began talking of Kraus, Bertuch, Musäus, Jagemann, etc., when he was impatiently interrupted with "But why don't you mention Goethe?" He answered that Goethe also had he seen; upon this he was called upon to give a description of that great poet, which he did in a quiet way, sufficient to have betrayed his incognito to more sagacious eyes.

Plessing then with great agitation informed him that Goethe had not answered a most pressing and passionate letter in which he, Plessing, had described the state of his mind, and had implored direction and assistance. Goethe excused himself as he best could; but Plessing insisted on reading him the letters, that he might judge whether they deserved such treatment.

He listened, and tried by temperate, sympathetic counsel to wean Plessing from his morbid thoughts by fixing them on external objects, especially by some active employment. These were impatiently rejected, and he left him, feeling that the case was almost beyond help.

He was subsequently able to assist Plessing, who, on visiting him at Weimar, discovered his old acquaintance, the landscape-painter.[1] But the characteristic part of this anecdote — and that which makes me cite it here — is the practical illustration it gives of his fundamental realism, which looked to nature and earnest activity as the sole cure for megrims, sentimentalisms, and self-torturings. Turn your mind to realities, and the self-made phantoms which darken your soul will disappear like night at the approach of dawn.

In the January of the following year (1778) Goethe was twice brought face to face with death. The first was during a boar-hunt: his spear snapped in the onslaught, and he was in imminent peril, but fortunately escaped. On the following day, while he and the

[1] In 1788, Plessing was appointed professor of philosophy in the University of Duisburg, where Goethe visited him on his return home from the campaign in France, 1792. The reader may be interested to know that Plessing entirely outlived his morbid melancholy, and gained a respectable name in German letters. His principal works are "Osiris und Socrates," 1783; "Historische und Philosophische Untersuchungen über die Denkart, Theologie und Philosophie der ältesten Völker," 1785; and "Memnonium, oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Alterthums," 1787. He died 1806.

duke were skating (perhaps talking over yesterday's escape), there came a crowd over the ice, bearing the corpse of the unhappy Fräulein von Lassberg, who, in the despair of unrequited love, had drowned herself in the Ilm, close by the very spot where Goethe was wont to take his evening walk. At all times this would have been a shock to him, but the shock was greatly intensified by the fact that in the pocket of the unfortunate girl was found a copy of "Werther!"[1] It is true we never reproach an author in such cases. No reflecting man ever reproached Plato with the suicide of Cleombrotus, or Schiller with the brigandage of highwaymen. Yet when fatal coincidences occur, the author, whom we absolve, cannot so lightly absolve himself. It is in vain to argue that the work does not, rightly considered, lead to suicide; if it does so, *wrongly* considered, it is a proximate cause; and the author cannot easily shake off that weight of blame. Goethe, standing upon logic, might have said: "If Plato instigated the suicide of Cleombrotus, certainly he averted that of Olympiodorus; if I have been one of the many causes which moved this girl toward that fatal act, I have also certainly been the cause of saving others, notably that young Frenchman who wrote to thank me." He might have argued this; but Conscience is tenderer than Logic; and if in firing at a wild beast I kill a brother hunter, my conscience will not leave me altogether in peace.

The body was borne to the house of the Frau von Stein, which stood nearest the spot, and there he remained with it the whole day, exerting himself to console the wretched parents. He himself had need of some consolation. The incident affected him deeply, and led him to speculate on all cognate subjects, espe-

[1] Riemer, who will never admit anything that may seem to tell against his idol, endeavours to throw a doubt on this fact, saying it was reported only out of malice. But he gives no reasons.

cially on melancholy. "This inviting sadness," he beautifully says, "has a dangerous fascination, *like water itself, and we are charmed by the reflex of the stars of heaven which shines through both.*"

He was soon, however, "*forced* into theatrical levity" by the various rehearsals necessary for the piece to be performed on the birthday of the duchess. This was the "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit." The adventure with Plessing, and finally the tragedy of the Fräulein von Lassberg, had given increased force to his antagonism against Wertherism and Sentimentality, which he now lashed with unsparing ridicule. The hero of his extravaganza is a prince, whose soul is only fit for moonlight ecstasies and sentimental rhapsodies. He adores Nature; not the rude, rough, imperfect Nature whose gigantic energy would alarm the sentimental mind; but the beautiful rose-pink Nature of books. He likes Nature as one sees it at the opera. Rocks are picturesque, it is true; but they are often crowned with tiaras of snow, sparkling, but apt to make one "chilly;" turbulent winds howl through their clefts and crannies, alarming to delicate nerves. The prince is not fond of the winds. Sunrise and early morn are lovely — but damp; and the prince is liable to rheumatism.

To obviate all such inconveniences he has had a mechanical imitation of Nature executed for his use; and this accompanies him on his travels; so that at a moment's notice, in secure defiance of rheumatism, he can enjoy a moonlight scene, a sunny landscape, or a sombre grove.

He is in love; but his mistress is as factitious as his landscapes. Woman is charming but capricious, fond but exacting; and therefore the prince has a doll dressed in the same style as the woman he once loved. By the side of this doll he passes hours of rapture; for it he sighs; for it he rhapsodises.

The *real* woman appears — the original of that much treasured image. Is he enraptured? Not in the least. His heart does not palpitate in her presence; he does not recognise her; but throws himself once more into the arms of his doll, and thus sensibility triumphs.

There are five acts of this "exquisite fooling." Originally it was much coarser and more personal than we now see it. Böttiger says that there remains scarcely a shadow of its flashing humour and satiric caprice. The whip of Aristophanes was applied with powerful wrist to every fashionable folly, in dress, literature, or morals, and the spectators saw themselves as in a mirror of sarcasm. At the conclusion, the doll was ripped open, and out fell a multitude of books, such as were then the rage, upon which severe and ludicrous judgments were passed — and the severest upon "Werther." The whole piece was interspersed with ballets, music, and comical changes of scene; so that what now appears a tiresome farce, was then an irresistible extravaganza.

This extravaganza has the foolery of Aristophanes, and the physical fun of that riotous wit, whom Goethe was then studying. But when critics are in ecstasies with its wit and irony, I confess myself at a loss to conceive clearly what they mean. National wit, however, is perhaps scarcely amenable to criticism. What the German thinks exquisitely ludicrous, is to a Frenchman, or an Englishman, often of mediocre mirthfulness. Wit requires delicate handling; the Germans generally touch it with gloved hands. Sarcasm is with them too often a sabre, not a rapier, hacking the victim where a thrust would suffice. It is a noticeable fact that, amid all the riches of their literature, they have little that is comic of a high order. They have produced no Comedy. To them may be applied the couplet of the great original of Grotesque Seriousness:

" Κωμωδοδιδασκαλίαν εἶναι χαλεπώτατον ἔργον ἁπάντων,
Πολλῶν γὰρ δὴ πειρασάντων αὐτὴν ὀλίγοις χαρίσασθαι." [1]

Which I will venture to turn thus:

" Miss Comedy is a sad flirt, — you may guess
From the number who court her, the few she doth bless."

[1] Aristophanes, "Equites," v. 516.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REAL PHILANTHROPIST.

A STRANGE phantasmagoria is the life he leads at this epoch. His employments are manifold, yet his studies, his drawing, etching, and rehearsing are carried on as if they alone were the occupation of the day. His immense activity, and power of varied employment, scatter the energies which might be consecrated to some great work; but in return, they give him the varied store of material of which he stood so much in need. At this time he is writing "Wilhelm Meister" and "Egmont;" "Iphigenia" is also taking shape in his mind. His office gives him much to do; and Gervinus, who must have known how great were the calls upon his time, should have paused ere he threw out the insinuation of "diplomatic rudeness" when Goethe answered one of his brother-in-law's letters through his secretary. Surely with a brother-in-law one may take such latitude?[1]

This man, whose diplomatic coldness and aristocratic haughtiness have formed the theme of so many long tirades, was of all Germans the most sincerely democratic, until the Reign of Terror in France frightened him, as it frightened others, into more modified opin-

[1] Since the text was written, the correspondence with the Frau v. Stein has appeared; and from it we learn that in Switzerland he even dictated some letters to *her*. It could not have been "diplomatic rudeness," inasmuch as he usually wrote to the duke himself through his amanuensis.

ions. Not only was he always delighted to be with the people, and to share their homely ways, which were consonant with his own simple tastes; but we find him in the confidence of intimacy expressing his sympathy with the people in the heartiest terms. When among the miners he writes to his beloved, "How strong my love has returned upon me for these lower classes! which one calls the lower, but which in God's eyes are assuredly the highest! Here you meet all the virtues combined: Contentedness, Moderation, Truth, Straightforwardness, Joy in the slightest good, Harmlessness, Patience — Patience — Constancy in — in . . . . I will not lose myself in panegyric!" Again, he is writing "Iphigenia," but the news of the misery and famine among the stocking-weavers of Apolda paralyses him. "The drama will not advance a step: it is cursed; the King of Tauris must speak as if no stocking-weaver in Apolda felt the pangs of hunger!"

In striking contrast stands the expression of his contempt for what was called the great world, as he watched it in his visits to the neighbouring courts. If affection bound him to Karl August, whom he was forming, and to Luise, for whom he had a chivalrous regard, his eyes were not blind to the nullity of other princes and their followers. "Good society have I seen," runs one of his epigrams; "they call it the 'good' whenever there is not in it the material for the smallest of poems."

"Gute Gesellschaft hab' ich gesehen; man nennt sie die gute
Wenn sie zum kleinsten Gedicht keine Gelegenheit giebt."

Notably was this the case in his journey with the duke to Berlin, May, 1778. He only remained a few days there; *saw* much, and not without contempt. "I have got quite close to old Fritz, having seen his way of life, his gold, his silver, his statues, his apes,

his parrots, and heard his own curs twaddle about the great man." Potsdam and Berlin were noisy with preparations for war. The great king was absent; but Prince Henry received the poet in a friendly manner, and invited him and Karl August to dinner. At table there were several generals; but Goethe, who kept his eyes open, sternly kept his mouth closed. He seems to have felt no little contempt for the Prussian court and its great men, who appeared very small men in his eyes. "I have spoken no word in the Prussian dominions which might not be made public. Therefore I am called haughty and so forth." Varnhagen intimates that the ill-will he excited by not visiting the literati, and by his reserve, was so great as to make him averse from hearing of his visit in after years.[1] What indeed, as Varnhagen asks, had Goethe in common with Nicolai, Ramler, Engel, Zellner, and the rest? He did visit the poetess Karschin and the artist Chodowiecki; but from the rest he kept aloof. Berlin was not a city in which he could feel himself at home; and he doubtless was fully aware of the small account in which he was held by Frederick, whose admiration lay in quite other directions. What culture the king had was French, and his opinion of German literature had been very explicitly pronounced in a work published this year, in which "Götz von Berlichingen" was cited as a sample of the reigning bad taste. The passage is too curious to be omitted. "Vous y verrez représenter les abominables pièces de Shakespeare traduites en notre langue, et tout l'auditoire se pâmer d'aise en entendant ces farces ridicules, et dignes *des sauvages de Canada.*" That certainly was afflicting to "le bon goût;" but *that* was not the worst. Shakespeare might be pardoned for *his* faults, "car la naissance des arts n'est jamais le point de leur maturité. Mais voilà encore un Götz de Berlichingen

[1] Varnhagen von Ense: "Vermischte Schriften," iii. p. 62.

qui paraît sur la scène, imitation détestable de ces mauvaises pièces anglaises, et le parterre applaudit et demande avec enthousiasme la répétition de *ces dégoûtantes platitudes!*"[1]

Thus the two German emperors, Fritz and Wolfgang, held no spiritual congress; perhaps no good result *could* have been elicited by their meeting. Yet they were, each in his own sphere, the two most potent men then reigning. Fritz did not directly assist the literature of his country, but his *indirect* influence has been indicated by Griepenkerl.[2] He awoke the Germans from their sleep by the rolling of drums; those who least liked the clang of arms or the "divisions of a battle-field," were nevertheless awakened to the fact that something important was going on in life, and they rubbed their sleepy eyes, and tried to *see* a little into that. The roll of drums had this merit, at all events, that it drew men from their library table to the window, and so made them look out upon the moving, living world of action, wherein the erudite might see a considerable sensation made even by men unable to conjugate a Greek verb in "$\mu\iota$."[3]

On returning to Weimar, Goethe occupied himself with various architectural studies, *à propos* of the rebuilding of the palace; and commenced those alterations in the park, which resulted in the beautiful distribution formerly described. But I pass over many details of his activity, to narrate an episode which must win the heart of every reader. In these pages

[1] "De la Littérature Allemande," p. 46. His opinion of the newly discovered Niebelungen Lied was no less characteristically contemptuous: he declared he would not give such rubbish house-room.

[2] Griepenkerl: "Der Kunstgenius der Deutschen Literatur des letzten Jahrhunderts," i. p. 52.

[3] Doctor George has become famous (or *did* become so — for, alas! what is fame?) by his shrewd suspicion that Frederick with all his victories could not accomplish *that* feat of intellectual vigour. Many men still measure greatness by verbs in $\mu\iota$.

it has been evident, I hope, that no compromise with the truth has led me to gloss over faults, or to conceal shortcomings. All that testimony warrants I have reproduced: good and evil, as in the mingled yarn of life. Faults and deficiencies, even grievous errors, do not estrange a friend from our hearts; why should they lower a hero? Why should the biographer fear to trust the tolerance of human sympathy? Why labour to prove a hero faultless? The reader is no *valet de chambre* incapable of crediting greatness in a *robe de chambre*. Never forget the profound saying of Hegel in answer to the vulgar aphorism ("No man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*"); namely, "This is not because the Hero is no Hero, but because the Valet is a Valet."[1] Having trusted to the effect which the true man would produce, in spite of all drawbacks, — and certain that the true man was *lovable* as well as admirable, I have made no direct appeal to the reader's sympathy, nor tried to make out a case in favour of extraordinary virtue.

But the tribute of affectionate applause is claimed now we have arrived at a passage in his life so *characteristic* of the delicacy, generosity, and nobility of his nature, that it is puzzling and painful to me to contemplate any one not loving him, after reading it. Of generosity, in the more ordinary sense, there are abundant examples in his history. Riemer has instanced several,[2] but these are acts of kindness, thoughtfulness, and courtesy, such as one expects to find in a prosperous poet. That he was kind, gave freely, sympathised freely, acted disinterestedly, and that his kindness showed itself in trifles quite as much

[1] "Nicht aber darum weil dieser kein Held ist, sondern weil jener der Kammerdiener ist." — *Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 40. Goethe repeated this as an epigram; and Carlyle has wrought it into the minds of hundreds; but Hegel is the originator.

[2] "Mittheilungen," vol. i. 102–5.

as in important actions (a most significant trait[1]) is known to all persons moderately acquainted with German literature. But the disposition exhibited in the story I am about to tell is such as few persons would have imagined to be lying beneath the stately prudence and calm self-mastery of the man so often styled "heartless."

This is the story: A man (his name still remains a secret) of a strange, morbid, suspicious disposition had fallen into destitution, partly from unfortunate circumstances, partly from his own fault. He applied to Goethe for assistance, as so many others did; and he painted his condition with all the eloquence of despair.

"According to the idea I form of you from your letters," writes Goethe, "I fancy I am not deceived, and this to me is very painful, in believing that I cannot give help or hope to one who needs so much. But I am not the man to say, 'Arise, and go further.' Accept the little that I can give, as a plank thrown toward you for momentary succour. If you remain longer where you are, I will gladly see that in future you receive some slight assistance. In acknowledging the receipt of this money, pray inform me how far you can make it go. If you are in want of a dress, greatcoat, boots, or warm stockings, tell me so; I have some that I can spare.

"Accept this drop of balsam from the compendious medicine-chest of the Samaritan, in the same spirit as it is offered."

[1] There is lamentable confusion in our estimate of character on this point of generosity. We often mistake a spasm of sensibility for the strength of lovingness; we take an *occasional* act of kindness as the sign of a kind nature. Benj. Constant says of himself: "*Je puis faire de bonnes et fortes actions; je ne puis avoir de bons procédés.*" There are hundreds like him. On the other hand, there are hundreds who willingly perform many little acts of kindness and courtesy, but who never rise to the dignity of generosity; these are *poor* natures, ignorant of the grander throbbings.

This was on the 2d of November, 1778. On the 11th he writes again, and from the letter we see that he had resolved to do *more* than throw a momentary plank to the shipwrecked man — in fact, he had undertaken to support him.

"In this parcel you will receive a greatcoat, boots, stockings, and some money. My plan for you this winter is this:

"In Jena living is cheap. I will arrange for board and lodging, etc., on the strictest economy, and will say it is for some one who, with a small pension, desires to live in retirement. When that is secured I will write to you; you can then go there, establish yourself in your quarters, and I will send you cloth and lining, with the necessary money, for a coat, which you can get made, and I will inform the rector that you were recommended to me, and that you wish to live in retirement at the university.

"You must then invent some plausible story, have your name entered on the books of the university, and no soul will ever inquire more about you, neither Burgomaster nor Amtmann. *I have not sent you one of my coats, because it might be recognised in Jena.* Write to me and let me know what you think of this plan, and at all events in what character you propose to present yourself."

The passage in italics indicates great thoughtfulness. Indeed the whole of this correspondence shows the most tender consideration for the feelings of his protégé. In the postscript he says: "And now step boldly forth again upon the path of life! We live but once. . . . Yes, I know perfectly what it is to take the fate of another upon one's own shoulders, but you shall not perish!" On the 23d he writes:

"I received to-day your two letters of the 17th and 18th, and have so far anticipated their contents as to have caused inquiry to be made in Jena for the fullest

details, as for one who wished to live there under the quiet protection of the university. Till the answer arrives keep quiet at Gera, and the day after to-morrow I will send you a parcel and say more.

"Believe me, you are not a burden on me; on the contrary, it teaches me economy; *I fritter away much of my income which I might spare for those in want.* And do you think that your tears and blessings go for nothing? *He who has must give, not bless; and if the Great and the Rich have divided between them the goods of this world, Fate has counterbalanced these by giving to the wretched the powers of blessing, powers to which the fortunate know not how to aspire.*"

Noble words! In the mouth of a pharisaical philanthropist *declaiming* instead of *giving*, there would be something revolting in such language; but when we know that the hand which wrote these words was "open as day to melting charity," when we know that (in spite of all other claims) he gave up for some years the sixth part of his very moderate income to rescue this stranger from want, when we know by the irrefragable argument of deeds, that this language was no hollow phrase, but the deep and solemn utterance of a thoroughly human heart, then these words awaken reverberations within our hearts, calling up feelings of loving reverence for him who uttered them.

How wise and kind is this also: "Perhaps there will soon turn up occasions for you to be useful to me where you are, for it is not the Project-maker and Promiser, but he who in trifles affords real service, that is welcome to one who would so willingly do something good and enduring.

"Hate not the poor philanthropists with their precautions and conditions, for one need pray diligently to retain, amid such bitter experience, the good-will, courage, and levity of youth, which are the main ingre-

dients of benevolence. And it is more than a benefit which God bestows when he calls us, who can so seldom do anything to lighten the burden of one truly wretched."

The next letter, dated December 11th, explains itself:

"Your letter of the 7th I received early this morning. And first, to calm your mind: you shall be forced to nothing; the hundred dollars you shall have, live where you may; but now listen to me.

"I know that to a man his ideas are realities; and although the image you have of Jena is false, still I know that nothing is less easily reasoned away than such hypochondriacal anxieties. I think Jena the best place for your residence, and for many reasons. The university has long lost its ancient wildness and aristocratic prejudices; the students are not worse than in other places, and among them there are some charming people. In Jena, they are so accustomed to the flux and reflux of men that no individual is remarked. And there are too many living in excessively straitened means, for poverty to be either a stigma or a noticeable peculiarity. Moreover, it is a city where you can more easily procure all necessities. In the country during winter, ill, and without medical advice, would not that be miserable?

"Further, the people to whom I referred you are good domestic people, who, on my account, would treat you well. Whatever might occur to you, I should be in a condition, one way or another, to assist you. I could aid you in establishing yourself; need only for the present guarantee your board and lodging, and pay for it later on. I could give you a little on New Year's Day, and procure what was necessary on credit. You would be nearer to me. Every market day I could send you something — wine, victuals, utensils that would cost me little, and would make your existence

more tolerable; and I could thus make you more a part of my household expenses. The objection to Gera is, that communication with it is so difficult; things do not arrive at proper times, and cost money which benefits no one. You would probably remain six months in Jena before any one remarked your presence. This is the reason why I preferred Jena to every other place, and you would do the same if you could but see things with untroubled vision. How, if you were to make a trial? However, I know a fly can distract a man with sensitive nerves, and that, in such cases, reasoning is powerless.

"Consider it: it will make all things easier. I promise you, you will be comfortable in Jena. But if you cannot overcome your objections, then remain in Gera. At New Year you shall have twenty-five dollars, and the same regularly every quarter. I cannot arrange it otherwise. I must look to my own household demands; that which I have given you already, because I was quite unprepared for it, has made a hole, which I must stop up as I can. If you were in Jena, I could give you some little commissions to execute for me, and perhaps some occupation; I could also make your personal acquaintance, and so on. But act just as your feelings dictate; if my reasons do not convince you, remain in your present solitude. Commence the writing of your life, as you talk of doing, and send it me piecemeal, and be persuaded that I am only anxious for your quiet and comfort, and choose Jena simply because I could there do more for you."

The hypochondriacal fancies of the poor man were invincible; and instead of going to Jena he went to Ilmenau, where Goethe secured him a home, and sent him books and money. Having thus seen to his material comforts, he besought him to occupy his mind by writing out the experience of his life, and what he had observed on his travels. In the fol-

lowing letter he refers to his other protégé, Peter Imbaumgarten:

"I am very glad the contract is settled. Your maintenance thus demands a hundred dollars yearly, and I will guarantee the twenty-five dollars quarterly, and contrive also that by the end of this month you shall receive a regular allowance for pocket-money. I will also send what I can *in natura*, such as paper, pens, sealing-wax, etc. Meanwhile here are some books.

"Thanks for your news; continue them. The wish to do good is a bold, proud wish; we must be thankful when we can secure even a little bit. I have now a proposition to make. When you are in your new quarters I wish you would pay some attention to a boy whose education I have undertaken, and who learns the huntsman's craft in Ilmenau. He has begun French; could you not assist him in it? He draws nicely; could you not keep him at it? I will fix the hours when he should come to you. You would lighten my anxiety about him if you could by friendly intercourse ascertain the condition of his mind, and inform me of it; and if you could keep an eye upon his progress. But of course this depends on your feeling disposed to undertake such a task. Judging from myself — *intercourse with children always makes me feel young and happy.* On hearing your answer, I will write more particulars. *You will do me a real service, and I shall be able to add monthly the trifle which I have set aside for the boy's education.* I trust I shall still be able to lighten your sad condition, so that you may recover your cheerfulness."

Let me call attention to the delicacy with which he here intimates that he does not mean to occupy Kraft's[1] time without remunerating it. If that pas-

[1] Herr Kraft was the *assumed* name of this still anonymous protégé.

sage be thoroughly considered, it will speak as much for the exquisite kindness of Goethe's nature as any greater act of liberality. Few persons would have considered themselves unentitled to *ask* such a service from one whose existence they had secured. To pay for it would scarcely have entered their thoughts. But Goethe felt that to demand a service, which might be irksome, would, in a certain way, be selling benevolence; if he employed Kraft's time, it was right that he should pay what he would have paid another master. On the other hand he instinctively shrank from the indelicacy of making a decided *bargain*. It was necessary to intimate that the lessons would be paid for; but with that intimation he also conveyed the idea that, in undertaking such a task, Kraft would be conferring an *obligation* upon him; so that Kraft might show his gratitude, might benefit his benefactor, and nevertheless be benefited. After reading such a sentence, I could, to use Wieland's expression, "have eaten Goethe for love!"

Kraft accepted the charge; and Goethe having sent him some linen for shirts, some cloth for a coat, and begged him to write without the least misgiving, now sends this letter:

"Many thanks for your care of Peter; the boy greatly interests me, for he is a legacy of the unfortunate Lindau. Do him all the good you can quietly. How you may advance him! I care not whether he reads, draws, or learns French, so that he does occupy his time, and I hear your opinion of him. For the present, let him consider his first object is to acquire the huntsman's craft, and try to learn from him how he likes it, and how he gets on with it. For, believe me, man must have a trade which will support him. The artist is never paid; it is the artisan. Chodowiecki, the artist whom we admire, would eat but scanty mouthfuls; but Chodowiecki, the artisan, who

with his woodcuts illumines the most miserable daubs, he is paid."

In a subsequent letter he says: "Many thanks. By your attention to these things, and your care of Peter, you have performed true service for me, and richly repaid all that I may have been able to do for you. Be under no anxiety about the future, there will certainly occur opportunities wherein you can be useful to me; meanwhile, continue as heretofore." This was written on the *very day* of his return to Weimar from the Swiss journey! If this tells us of his attention to his protégé, the next letter tells us of his anticipating even the casualty of death, for he had put Kraft on the list of those whom he left as legacies of benevolence to his friends. It should be remarked that Goethe seems to have preserved profound secrecy with respect to the good he was then doing; not even in his confidential letters to Frau von Stein is there one hint of Kraft's existence! In short, *nothing* is wanting to complete the circle of genuine benevolence.

The year 1781 began with an increase of Kraft's pension; or rather, instead of paying a hundred dollars for his board and lodging, and allowing him pocket-money, he made the sum two hundred dollars. "I can spare as much as that; and you need not be anxious about every trifle, but can lay out your money as you please. Adieu; and let me soon hear that all your sorrows have left you." This advance seems to have elicited a demand for *more* money, which produced the following characteristic answer:

"You have done well to disclose the whole condition of your mind to me; I can make all allowances, little as I may be able to calm you completely. My own affairs will not permit me to promise you a farthing more than the two hundred dollars, unless I were to get into debt, which in my place would be very

unseemly. This sum you shall receive regularly. Try to make it do.

"I certainly do not suppose that you will change your place of residence without my knowledge and consent. Every man has his duty; make a duty of your love to me and you will find it light.

"It would be very disagreeable to me if you were to *borrow* from any one. It is precisely this miserable unrest now troubling you which has been the misfortune of your whole life, and you have never been more contented with a thousand dollars than you now are with two hundred: because you always still desired something which you had not, and have never accustomed your soul to accept the limits of necessity. I do not reproach you with it; I know, unhappily too well, how it pertains to you, and feel how painful must be the contrast between your present and your past. But enough! One word for a thousand: at the end of every quarter you shall receive fifty dollars; for the present an advance shall be made. Limit your wants: the *Must* is hard, and yet solely by this *Must* can we show how it is with us in our inner man. To live according to caprice requires no peculiar powers."[1]

The following explains itself:

"If you once more read over my last letter you will see plainly that you have misinterpreted it. You are neither *fallen in my esteem*, nor have I a *bad opinion* of you, neither have I suffered my *good opinion* to be led astray, nor has your mode of thinking become *damaged* in my eyes: all these are exaggerated expressions, such as a rational man should not permit himself. Because I speak out my thoughts with *freedom*, because I wish certain traits in your conduct and views somewhat

[1] I will give the original of this fine saying, as I have rendered it but clumsily: Dass *Muss* ist hart, aber beim *Muss* kann der Mensch allein zeigen wie's inwendig mit ihm steht. Willkürlich leben kann jeder.

different, does that mean that I look on you as a *bad man*, and that I wish to discontinue our relations?

"It is these hypochondriacal, weak, and exaggerated notions, such as your last letter contains, which I blame and regret. Is it proper that you should say to me: *I am to prescribe the tone in which all your future letters must be written?* Does one command an honourable, rational man such things as that? Is it ingenuous in you on such an occasion to *underline* the words that you eat *my bread?* Is it becoming in a moral being, when one gently blames him, or names something in him as a malady, to fly out as if one had pulled the house about his ears? Do not misconstrue me, therefore, if I wish to see you contented and satisfied with the little I can do for you. So, if you will, things shall remain just as they were; at all events, I shall not change my behaviour toward you."

The unhappy man seems to have been brought to a sense of his injustice by this, for although there is but one more letter, bearing the date 1783, that is, two years subsequent to the one just given, the connection lasted for seven years. When Goethe undertook to write the life of Duke Bernhard, he employed Kraft to make extracts for him from the Archives; which extracts, Luden, when he came to look over them with a biographical purpose, found utterly worthless.[1] The last words we find of Goethe's addressed to Kraft are, "You have already been of service to me, and other opportunities will offer. I have no grace to dispense, and my favour is not so fickle. Farewell, and enjoy your little in peace." It was terminated only by the death of the poor creature in 1785. Goethe buried him at his own expense, but even to the Jena officials he did not disclose Kraft's real name.[2]

[1] See Luden's "Rückblicke in mein Leben."

[2] I learn this from a letter to the judge at Jena, which was exhibited at the *Goethe Ausstellung* in Berlin, 1861.

To my apprehension these letters reveal a nature so exquisite in far-thoughted tenderness, so true and human in its sympathies with suffering, and so ready to alleviate suffering by sacrifices rarely made to friends, much less to strangers, that, after reading them, the epithets of "cold" and "heartless," often applied to Goethe, sound like blasphemies against the noblest feelings of humanity. Observe, this Kraft was no romantic object appealing to the sensibility; he had no thrilling story to stimulate sympathy; there was no subscription list opened for him; there were no coteries weeping over his misfortunes. Unknown, unfriended, ill at ease with himself and with the world, he revealed his wretchedness in secret to the great poet, and in secret that poet pressed his hand, dried his eyes, and ministered to his wants. And he did this not as *one* act, not as one passing impulse, but as the sustained sympathy of seven years.

Pitiful and pathetic is the thought that such a man can, for so many years, both in his own country and in ours, have been reproached, nay, even vituperated, as cold and heartless! A certain reserve and stiffness of manner, a certain soberness of old age, a want of political enthusiasm, and some sentences wrenched from their true meaning, are the evidences whereon men build the strange hypothesis that he was an Olympian Jove sitting *above* Humanity, *seeing* life but not *feeling* it, his heart dead to all noble impulses, his career a calculated egotism! How it was that one so heartless became the greatest poet of modern times — how it was that he whose works contained the widest compass of human life should himself be a bloodless, pulseless diplomatist — no one thought of explaining, till Menzel arose, and with unparalleled effrontery maintained that Goethe had no genius, but only talent, and that the miracle of his works lies in their style — a certain adroitness in representation. Menzel is a man

so completely rejected by England — the translation of his work met with such hopeless want of encouragement, that I am perhaps wrong to waste a line upon it; but the bold style in which his trenchant accusations are made, and the assumption of a certain manliness as the momentum to his sarcasms, have given his attacks on Goethe a circulation independent of his book. To me he appears radically incompetent to appreciate a poet. I should as soon think of asking the first stalwart Kentish farmer for his opinion on the Parthenon. The farmer would doubtless utter some energetic sentences expressing his sense of its triviality; but the coarse energy of his language would not supply the place of knowledge, feeling, and taste; nor does the coarse energy of Menzel's style supply those deficiencies of nature and education which incapacitate him for the perception of Art.

The paradox still remains, then, in spite of Menzel: a great poet destitute of the feelings which poetry incarnates — a man destitute of soul giving expression to all the emotions he has not — a man who wrote "Werther," "Egmont," "Faust," "Hermann und Dorothea," and "Meister," yet knew not the joys and sorrows of his kind; will any one defend that paradox?[1] Not only that paradox, but this still more inexplicable one, that all who knew Goethe, whether they were his peers or his servants, loved him only as lovable natures can be loved. Children, women, clerks, professors, poets, princes — all loved him. Even Herder, bitter against every one, spoke of him with a reverence which astonished Schiller, who writes: "He is by many besides Herder named with a species of devotion,

[1] I remember once, as we were walking along Piccadilly, talking about the infamous "Büchlein von Goethe," Carlyle stopped suddenly, and with his peculiar look and emphasis, said, "Yes, it is the wild cry of amazement on the part of all spooneys that the Titan was not a spooney too! Here is a godlike intellect, and yet you see he is not an idiot! Not in the least a spooney!"

and *still more loved as a man* than admired as an author. Herder says he has a clear, universal mind, the truest and deepest feeling, and the greatest purity of heart."[1] Men might learn so much from his works, had not the notion of his coldness and indifference disturbed their judgment. "In no line," says Carlyle, "does he speak with asperity of any man, scarcely of anything. He knows the good and loves it; he knows the bad and hateful and rejects it; but in neither case with violence. His love is calm and active; his rejection implied rather than pronounced."

And Schiller, when he came to appreciate by daily intercourse the qualities of his great friend, thus wrote of him: "It is not the greatness of his intellect which binds me to him. If he were not as a man more admirable than any I have ever known, I should only marvel at his genius from the distance. But I can truly say that in the six years I have lived with him, I have never for one moment been deceived in his character. He has a high truth and integrity, and is thoroughly in earnest for the Right and the Good; hence all hypocrites and phrase makers are uncomfortable in his presence." And the man, of whom Schiller could think thus, is believed by many to have been a selfish egotist, "wanting in the higher moral feelings!"

But so it is in life: a rumour, originating perhaps in thoughtless ignorance, and circulated by malice, gains credence in the face of probability, and then no amount of evidence suffices to dissipate it. There is an atmosphere round certain names, a halo of glory or a halo of infamy; and men are aware of the halo without seeking to ascertain its origin. Every public man is in some respects mythical; and fables are believed in spite of all the contradictions of evidence. It is useless to hope that men will pause to inquire into the truth of what they hear said of another, before accept-

[1] "Briefw. mit Körner, i. p. 136.

ing and repeating it; but with respect to Goethe, who has now been more than forty years in his grave, one may hope that evidence so strong as these pages furnish will be held more worthy of credence than anything which gossip or ignorance, misconception or partisanship, has put forth without proof.

Book the Fifth

1779 to 1793

"Wenn sich der Most auch ganz absurd gebärdet,
Es giebt zuletzt doch noch 'nen Wein."

"Von jener Macht, die alle Wesen bindet,
Befreit der Mensch sich der sich überwindet."

"Postquam me experientia docuit, omnia, quæ in communi vita frequenter occurrunt, vana et futilia esse: quum viderem omnia, a quibus et quæ timebam, nihil neque boni neque mali in se habere, nisi quatenus ab iis animus movebatur; constitui tandem inquirere, an aliquid daretur quod verum bonum et sui communicabile esset, et a quo solo rejectis ceteris omnibus animus afficeretur; imo an aliquid daretur, quo invento et acquisito continua ac summa in æternum fruerer lætitia."

SPINOZA.

CHAPTER I.

NEW BIRTH.

THE changes slowly determining the evolution of character, when from the lawlessness of Youth it passes into the clear stability of Manhood, resemble the evolution of harmony in the tuning of an orchestra, when from stormy discords, wandering in pursuit of concord, all the instruments gradually subside into the true key: round a small centre the hurrying sounds revolve, one by one falling into that centre, and increasing its circle, at first slowly, and afterward with ever-accelerated velocity, till victorious concord emerges from the tumult. Or they may be likened to the gathering splendour of the dawn, as at first slowly, and afterward with silent velocity, it drives the sullen darkness to the rear, and with a tidal sweep of light takes tranquil possession of the sky. Images such as these represent the dawn of a new epoch in Goethe's life; an epoch when the wanderings of an excitable nature are gradually falling more and more within the circle of law; when aims, before vague, now become clear; when in the recesses of his mind much that was fluent becomes crystallised by the earnestness which gives a definite purpose to his life. All men of genius go through this process of crystallisation. Their youth is disturbed by the turbulence of errors and of passions; if they outlive these errors, they convert them into advantages. Just as the sides of great mountain ridges are rent by fissures filled with molten rock, which, when the lava cools, act like vast supporting ribs strengthening the mountain mass,

so in men of genius, passions first rend, and afterward buttress life. The diamond, it is said, can only be polished by its own dust; is not this symbolical of the truth that only by its own fallings-off can genius properly be taught? And is not our very walk, as Goethe says, a series of falls?

He was now (1779) entering his thirtieth year. Life slowly emerged from the visionary mists through which hitherto it had been seen; the solemn earnestness of manhood took the place of the vanishing thoughtlessness of youth, and gave a more commanding unity to his existence. He had "resolved to deal with Life no longer by halves, but to work it out in its totality, beauty, and goodness — *vom Halben zu entwöhnen, und im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen resolut zu leben.*" It is usually said that the residence in Italy was the cause of this change; but the development of his genius was the real cause. The slightest acquaintance with the period we are now considering suffices to prove that long before he went to Italy the change had taken place.[1] An entry in his Diary at this date is very significant: "Put my things in order, looked through my papers, and burnt all the old chips. Other times, other cares! Calm retrospect of Life, and the extravagances, impulses, and eager desires of youth; how they seek satisfaction in all directions! How I have found delight, especially in mysteries, in dark imaginative connections; how I only half-seized hold of Science, and then let it slip; how a sort of modest self-complacency runs through all I wrote; how short-sighted I was in divine and human things; how many days wasted in sentiments and shadowy passions; how little good I

[1] The Duchess Amalia writing to his mother, this year, says: "Your news of the marriage of the daughter of Mad. La Roche is so wonderful that it baffles reason. I showed your letter to *Doctor Wolff* (Goethe), but the court life has so softened his manners that he never gnashed his teeth, nor even swore, but shrugged his shoulders over the deplorable adventure."

have drawn from them, and now the half of life is over, I find myself advanced no step on my way, but stand here as one who, escaped from the waves, begins to dry himself in the sun. The period in which I have mingled with the world, since October, 1775, I dare not yet trust myself to look at. God help me further, and give me light, that I may not so much stand in my own way, but see to do from morning till evening the work which lies before me, and obtain a clear conception of the order of things; that I be not as those are who spend the day in complaining of headache, and the night in drinking the wine which gives the headache!"

There is something quite solemn in those words. The same thought is expressed in a letter to Lavater: "The desire to raise the pyramid of my existence, the basis of which is already laid, as high as practicable in the air, absorbs every other desire, and scarcely ever quits me. I dare not longer delay; I am already advanced in life, and perhaps Death will break in at the middle of my work, and leave the Babylonic tower incomplete. At least men shall say it was boldly schemed, and if I live, my powers shall, with God's aid, reach the completion." And in a recently published letter to the duke, he says: "I let people say what they will, and then I retire into my old fortress of Poetry and work at my 'Iphigenia.' By this I am made sensible that I have been treating this heavenly gift somewhat too cavalierly, and there is still time and need for me to become more economical if ever I am to bring forth anything."[1]

No better index of the change can be named than his "Iphigenia auf Tauris," written at this period. The reader will learn with some surprise that this wonderful poem was originally written in prose. It was the fashion of the day. "Götz," "Egmont," "Tasso," and

[1] "Briefwechsel zwischen Karl August und Goethe," i. 11.

"Iphigenia," no less than Schiller's "Robbers," "Fiesco," "Kabale und Liebe," were written in prose; and when "Iphigenia" assumed a poetic form, the Weimar friends were disappointed — they *preferred* the prose.

This was part of the mania for returning to Nature. Verse was pronounced unnatural; although, in truth, verse is not more unnatural than song. Song is to speech what poetry is to prose; it expresses a different mental condition. Impassioned prose *approaches* poetry in the rhythmic impulse of its movements; as impassioned speech in its varied cadences also approaches the intonations of music. Under great emotional excitement the Arabs give their language a recognisable metre, and almost talk poetry. But prose never *is* poetry, or is so only for a moment; nor is speech song. Schiller learned to see this, and we find him writing to Goethe, "I have never before been so palpably convinced as in my present occupation how closely in poetry Substance and Form are connected. Since I have begun to transform my prosaic language into a poetic rhythmical one, I find myself *under a totally different jurisdiction;* even many motives which in the prosaic execution seemed to me to be perfectly in place, I can no longer use: they were merely *good for the common domestic understanding, whose organ prose seems to be;* but verse absolutely demands reference to the imagination, and thus I was obliged to become poetical in many of my motives."

That Goethe should have fallen into the sophism which asserted prose to be more natural than verse is surprising. His mind was full of song. To the last he retained the faculty of singing melodiously, when his prose had degenerated into comparative feebleness. And this prose "Iphigenia" is saturated with verses; which is also the case with "Egmont." He *meant* to write prose, but his thoughts instinctively expressed themselves in verse. The critical reader will do well

to compare the prose with the poetic version.[1] He will not only see how frequent the verses are, but how few were the alterations necessary to transform the prose drama into a poem. They are just the sort of touches which elevate poetry above prose. Thus, to give an example, in the prose he says: "*Unnütz seyn, ist todt seyn* (To be useless is to be dead)," which thus grows into a verse:

> "Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod
> (A life not useful is an early death)."

Again, in the speech of Orestes (Act II. sc. i.), there is a fine and terrible allusion to Clytemnestra, "Better die here before the altar than in an obscure nook where the nets of murderous near *relatives* are placed." In the prose this allusion is not clear — Orestes simply says "the nets of assassins."[2]

The alterations do not touch the substance of this drama; we must therefore consider it a product of the period now under review; and as such we may examine it at once.

[1] See vol. xxxiv. of the edition of 1840.

[2] Neither Taylor nor Miss Swanwick appears to have seized the allusion. One translates it, "by the *knives of avenging kindred*;" the other, "where *near hands* have spread *assassination's wily net*."

CHAPTER II.

IPHIGENIA.

IT was very characteristic in Schlegel to call "Iphigenia" "an echo of Greek song;" he delighted in such rhetorical prettinesses; but that German scholars should have so often repeated the phrase, and should have so often without misgiving declared "Iphigenia" to be the finest modern specimen of Greek tragedy, is truly surprising, until we reflect on the mass of flagrant traditional errors afloat respecting the Greek drama. For a long while the Three Unities were held to be inseparable from that drama; in spite of the fact that in several plays Unity of Time is obviously disregarded, and in two or three the Unity of Place is equally so. Again there was the notion that Comedy and Tragedy were not suffered to mingle in the same play; in spite of the palpable fact of Æschylus and Euripides having mingled them. It was also believed that Destiny formed the tragic-pivot; in spite of the fact that in the *majority* of these plays Destiny has *no* place, beyond what the religious conceptions of the poets must of necessity have given to it; just as Christianity must of necessity underlie the tragic conceptions of Christian poets.

The very phrase with which critics characterise "Iphigenia" is sufficient to condemn them. They tell us it has "all the repose of Greek tragedy." Consider it for a moment: Repose in a tragedy! that is to say, calmness in the terrific upheaving of volcanic passions. Tragedy, we are told by Aristotle, acts through Terror

and Pity, awakening in our bosoms sympathy with suffering; and to suppose *this* effect can be accomplished by the "meditative repose which breathes from every verse," is tantamount to supposing a battle-song will most vigorously stir the blood of combatants if it borrow the accents of a lullaby.

Insensibly our notions of Greek art are formed from sculpture; and hence, perhaps, this notion of repose. But acquaintance with the drama ought to have prevented such an error, and taught men not to confound calmness of *evolution* with calmness of *life*. The unagitated simplicity of Greek scenic representation lay in the nature of the scenic necessities; but we do not call the volcano cold, because the snow rests on its top. Had the Greek drama been exhibited on stages like those of modern Europe, and performed by actors without cothurnus and mask, its deep agitations of passion would have welled up to the surface, communicating responsive agitations to the form. But there were reasons why this could not be. In the Grecian drama, everything was on a scale of vastness commensurate with the needs of an audience of many thousands; and consequently everything was disposed in masses rather than in details; it thus necessarily assumed something of the sculpturesque form, threw itself into magnificent groupings, and, with a view to its effect, adapted a peculiar eurhythmic construction. It thus assumed slowness of movement, because it could not be rapid without distortion. If the critic doubts this, let him mount on stilts, and, bawling through a speaking-trumpet, try what he can make of Shakespeare; he will then have an approximative idea of the restraints laid upon the Grecian actor, who, clothed so as to aggrandise his person, and speaking through a resonant mask, which had a *fixed* expression, could not *act*, in our modern sense of the word, but could only declaim; he had no means of representing the *fluctuations* of pas-

sion, and the poet therefore was forced to make him represent passion in broad, fixed masses. Hence the movement of the Greek drama was necessarily large, slow, and simple.

But if we pierce beneath scenic necessities and attend solely to the dramatic life which pulses through the Grecian tragedies, what sort of calmness meets us there? Calmness is a relative word. Polyphemus hurling rocks as schoolboys throw cherry-stones, would doubtless smile at our riots, as we smile at buzzing flies; and Moloch howling through the unfathomable wilderness in passionate repentance of his fall, would envy us the wildest of our despair, and call it calmness. But measured by human standards, I know not whose sorrow "can bear such emphasis" as to pronounce those pulses calm which throb in the "Œdipus," the "Agamemnon," or the "Ajax." The Labdacidan Tale is one of the sombrest threads woven by the Parcæ.

The subjects selected by the Greek dramatists are almost uniformly such as to call into play the darkest passions: madness, adultery, and murder in "Agamemnon;" revenge, murder, and matricide in the "Choëphoræ;" incest in "Œdipus;" jealousy and infanticide in "Medea;" incestuous adultery in "Hippolytus;" madness in "Ajax;" and so on throughout the series. The currents of these passions are for ever kept in agitation, and the alternations of pity and terror close only with the closing of the scene. In other words, in spite of the slowness of its scenic presentation, this drama is distinguished by the very absence of the repose which is pronounced its characteristic.

Here we meet with the first profound difference separating Goethe from the Greek dramatist. The repose which was forced upon the Greek, which formed one of his restraints, as the hardness of the marble restrains the sculptor, Goethe has adopted under conditions which did *not* force him; while the repose, which the

Greek kept only at the surface, Goethe has allowed to settle down to the core. In what was accidental, temporal, he has imitated Greek Art; in the one essential characteristic he has not imitated it. Racine, so unjustly treated by Schlegel, *has* given us the passionate life of the Greek Drama, in spite of his *Madame* Hermione and *Monsieur* Oreste; in imitating the slow scenic movement he has also imitated the dramatic agitation of the under-current.

Goethe's "Iphigenia," then, we must cease to regard according to the Grecian standard. It is a German play. It substitutes profound moral struggles for the passionate struggles of the old legend. It is not Greek in ideas nor in sentiment. It is German, and transports Germany of the eighteenth century into Scythia during the mythic age, quite as absolutely as Racine places the Court of Versailles in the Camp of Aulis; and with the same ample justification.[1] The points in which Goethe's work resembles the Greek are, first, the slowness of its scenic movement and simplicity of its action, which produce a corresponding calmness in the dialogue; and, secondly, a saturation with mythic lore. All the rest is German. And this Schiller, as a dramatist, clearly saw. "I am astonished," he says, "to find this piece no longer makes the same favourable impression on me that it did formerly; though I still recognise it as a work full of soul. *It is, however, so astonishingly modern and un-Greek that I cannot understand how it was ever thought to resemble a Greek play.* It is purely moral, but the *sensuous power, the life, the agitation, and everything which specifically be-*

[1] This error of local colouring, which critics more erudite than acute have ridiculed in Racine, is not only an error commanded by the very conditions of Art, but is the very error committed by the Greeks themselves. In this play of "Iphigenia," Euripides has committed anachronisms as gross as any chargeable to Racine; and justly: he wrote for the audience of his day, he did not write for antiquity

longs to a dramatic work, is wanting. Goethe has himself spoken slightingly of it, but I took that as a mere caprice or coquetry; now I understand him."

Schiller adds, however, that apart from the dramatic form, "Iphigenia" is a marvellous production, which must for ever remain the delight and wonderment of mankind. This is striking the right chord. A drama it is not; it is a marvellous dramatic poem. The grand and solemn movement of its evolution responds to the large and simple ideas which it unfolds. It has the calmness of majesty. In the limpid clearness of its language the involved mental processes of the characters are as transparent as the operations of bees within a crystal hive; while a constant strain of high and lofty music makes the reader feel as if in a holy temple. And above all witcheries of detail, there is the one capital witchery, belonging to Greek statues more than to any other works of human cunning — the perfect unity of impression produced by the whole, so that nothing in it seems *made,* but all to *grow;* nothing is superfluous, but all is in organic dependence; nothing is there for detached effect, but the whole is effect. The poem fills the mind; beautiful as the separate passages are, admirers seldom think of passages, they think of the wondrous whole.

I cannot in language less than hyperbolical express my admiration for this work considered in itself; as a drama, I think an instructive parallel might be drawn between it and the "Iphigenia" of Euripides. The enormous superiority of Goethe in intellectual stature, even aided by the immeasurable advantage he has of writing in a language which is in some sort our own, would not cover his inferiority as a dramatist.

In Euripides we have this groundwork: Iphigenia, about to be sacrificed at Aulis, was snatched away in a cloud by Diana, and a hind substituted in her place; she is now priestess of Diana in Tauris, where she

presides over the bloody sacrifice of every stranger thrown on the inhospitable shores. Orestes and Pylades, in obedience to the Oracle, come to Tauris intent on bearing away the Image of Diana: that accomplished, Orestes is to be released from the Furies who pursue him. The two are seized, and brought to Iphigenia for sacrifice. A recognition takes place; and she aids them in their original design of carrying away the goddess. They are pursued by the Scythians, but Minerva appears, to cut the knot and calm the rage of Thoas.

This story Goethe has modernised. The characters are essentially different, the moral elements are different, and the effect is different. His Iphigenia, every way superior to the Greek priestess, has the high, noble, tender, delicate soul of a Christian maiden. Forced to fulfil the duties of a Priestess, she subdues by her mild influence the fierce prejudice of Thoas, and makes him discontinue the barbarous practice of human sacrifices. She, who herself had been anointed as a sacrifice, could she preside over the sacrifice of another? This sympathy is modern. No Greek would have suffered her own personal feelings thus to rise up in rebellion against a religious rite. The key-note is struck here, and this tone sounds through the whole piece.

Iphigenia is melancholy, and pines for her native shores, in spite of the honour which attends, and the good she effects by her influence on Thoas. The fate of her family perturbs her. Thoas has conceived a passion for her.

> "Thou sharedst my sorrow when a hostile sword
> Tore from my side my last, my dearest son;
> *Long as fierce vengeance occupied my heart,*
> *I did not feel my dwelling's dreary void;*
> But now, returning home, my rage appeased,
> My foes defeated, and my son avenged,
> I find there's nothing left to comfort me."[1]

[1] In all extracts from this work I avail myself of the translation by Miss Swanwick ("Selections from Goethe and Schiller"),

And he expresses a hope to "bear her to his dwelling as a bride," which she gently evades; he then taxes her with the mystery in which she has shrouded herself. She answers:

"If I concealed, O king, my name and race,
'Twas fear which prompted me, and not mistrust;
For didst thou know who stands before thee now,
And what accursed head thy arm protects,
A shuddering horror would possess thy heart;
And, far from wishing me to share thy throne,
Wouldst banish me perchance."

Thoas replies, with generosity, that nothing shall make him cease his protection.

"In my hands
The goddess placed thee; thou hast been to me
As sacred as to her, and her behest
Shall for the future also be my law.
If thou canst hope in safety to return
Back to thy kindred, I renounce my claims."

This promise becomes an important agent in the dénouement, and is skilfully contrived. Iphigenia, urged by him to speak out, utters this tremendous line:

"Know: I issue from the race of Tantalus!" [1]

Thoas is staggered; but after she has narrated the story of her race, he repeats his offer of marriage,

which is many degrees superior to that of the late William Taylor ("Survey of German Poetry," vol. iii.). Feeling, as I profoundly feel, the insuperable difficulties of translating Goethe into English, it would ill become me to criticise Miss Swanwick's version; but it would also be very unjust not to add, that all versions miss the exquisite beauty of the original, and resemble it no more than a rough woodcut resembles a Titian.

[1] "*Vernimm: ich bin aus Tantalus Geschlecht.*"

Miss Swanwick, from metrical necessity, has weakened this into:

"Attend: I issue from the Titan's race."

It was indispensable to preserve the name of Tantalus, so pregnant with terrible suggestion.

which she will not accept. Irritated by her refusal, he exclaims:

"Be priestess still
Of the great goddess who selected thee;
And may she pardon me that I from her
Unjustly, and with secret self-reproach,
Her ancient sacrifice so long withheld.
From olden times no stranger near'd our shore
But fell a victim at her sacred shrine;
But thou with kind affection didst enthral me
That I forgot my duty. Thou didst rock
My senses in a dream: I did not hear
My people's murmurs: now they cry aloud,
Ascribing my poor son's untimely death
To this my guilt. No longer for thy sake
Will I oppose the wishes of the crowd
Who urgently demand the sacrifice.
. . . . . .
Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
We found concealed, and whose arrival here
Bodes to my realm no good, are in my power:
With them thy goddess may once more resume
Her ancient, pious, long-suspended rites."

Thus ends the first act.

In the conception of Thoas a great dramatic collision is rendered impossible: so high and generous a nature cannot resist an appeal to his generosity; and thus the spectator foresees there will be no struggle. In Euripides, on the contrary, the fierce Scythian looms from the dark background, terrible as fate; and he is artfully withheld from appearing on the scene until the very last. *How* he is to be appeased no spectator foresees. To be sure, he is appeased by a *Deus ex machinâ*, and not by a dramatic unravelling of the entangled threads; but this inferiority is, dramatically speaking, more than compensated by the effect of the collision, and the agitation kept up to the last. Thoas in Goethe is a *moral*, not a *dramatic* figure.[1]

[1] The notion of making Thoas in love is not new. Lagrange-Chancel, in his "Oreste et Pylade" (a real treat to any one with a

The carelessness to all dramatic effect which weakens this play is seen in the very avoidance of a path Euripides had opened, viz., the certainty in the mind of the audience that Orestes and Pylades are the two captives to be slaughtered. In Euripides, Orestes and his companion appear on the scene before they are made prisoners; in Goethe, not till after their capture has been announced. The effect of the announcement in Euripides is powerful, in Goethe it is null.[1]

In the second act Orestes and Pylades appear. The scene between them is very undramatic, but beautiful as a poetic exposition of their mental conditions. Orestes feels —

> "It is the path of death that now we tread,
> At every step my soul grows more serene."

But Pylades clings to life, and to his purpose. "Am I not," he says, —

> "As ever full of courage and of joy?
> And love and courage are the spirit's wings
> Wafting to noble actions.

perception of the ludicrous), has thrown as much "galanterie" into this play as one may find in an opera. Thoas loves Iphigénie, who loves Pylade; but while the tyrant sighs in vain, the truculent Scythian is sighed for by Thomyris, *princesse du sang royal des Scythes*. As a specimen of *couleur locale*, I may mention that Thoas in this play has a *capitaine des gardes* and two *ministres d'état*, with an *ambassadeur Sarmate* resident at his court.

[1] Compare Eurip. v. 264, sq. There is one touch in the peasant's narrative which is very significant of that period when gods walked the earth so familiarly with man that every stranger might be taken for a god:

> "ἐνταῦθα δισσοὺς εἶδέ τις νεανίας
> βουφορβὸς ἡμῶν, κἀπεχώρησεν πάλιν
> ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι πορθμεύων ἴχνος.
> ἴδεξε δ', οὐχ ὁρᾶτε; δαίμονές τινες
> θάσσουσιν οἵ δε."

"There one of our cowboys espied the two youths, and stepping backward on the points of his toes, retraced his steps, saying, 'Do you not see them? they are gods seated there.'"

Orestes. Noble actions?
Time was when fancy painted such before us!
When oft, the game pursuing, on we roam'd
O'er hill and valley: hoping that ere long,
With club and weapon arm'd, we so might chase
The track of robber or of monster huge.
And then at twilight, by the glassy sea,
We peaceful sat reclined against each other;
The waves came dancing to our very feet,
And all before us lay the wide, wide world.
Then on a sudden one would seize his sword,
And future deeds shone round us like the stars
Which gemm'd in countless throngs the vault of night.
Pylades. Endless, my friend, the projects which the soul
Burns to accomplish. We would every deed
Perform at once as grandly as it shows
After long ages, when from land to land
The poet's swelling song hath rolled it on.
It sounds so lovely what our fathers did,
When in the silent evening shade reclined,
We drink it in with music's melting tones.
And what we do, is as it was to them
Toilsome and incomplete."

Pylades fails to inspire him, however, with the resolution which he feels, and with belief in the probability of their escape from the shameful death, which Orestes accepts so calmly. Pylades has heard from the guards the character of Iphigenia; and congratulates himself on the fact that it is a woman who holds their fates in her hands, for even the best of men —

"With horror may familiarise his mind;
Through custom so transform his character,
That he at length shall make himself a law
Of what his very soul at first abhorred."

On some not very intelligible pretext he makes Orestes withdraw, that he may have an interview with Iphigenia; and as she approaches, unbinds his chains, and speaks, he adroitly bursts forth into these words:

"Delicious music! dearly welcome tones
Of our own language in a foreign land!
With joy my captive eye once more beholds
The azure mountains of my native coast."[1]

He then tells her a story something like the real one, but disguising names: the *purpose* of which I do not detect. She inquires after her family, and hears the story of her mother's guilt. Noting her agitation, he asks if she be connected with that family by friendship. She sternly replies:

"Say on: and tell me how the deed was done."

He tells her. All she says is a few brief words, which are terribly significant: when he concludes, she veils herself, and withdraws saying:

"Enough: thou soon wilt see me once again."

And the act ends in this very *evasive* manner. The third act opens with the visit of Iphigenia to Orestes, in which she requests him to finish the story that Pylades had already half told; and he does so at some length. Disdaining the guile which had prompted Pylades to conceal their names, he boldly says:

"I am Orestes!"

Here is a proper ἀναγνώρισις, — and naturally, no less than dramatically, it demands a cry from the heart of Iphigenia, who should at once fling herself into her

[1] M. Patin has, I think, mistaken the import of this speech: comparing it with the simple exclamation of Philoctetes, he says, "Philoctète n'en savait pas tant, il n'était pas si habile à se rendre compte de ses secrets mouvements: tout ce qu'il pouvait était de s'écrier, 'O douce parole!'" — *Études sur les Tragiques Grecs*, iii. p. 323. But Pylades is not expressing *his* sentiments. His ear is not unfamiliar with the accents of his own language — he has just before heard them from Orestes: but by picturing Greece to *her*, he adroitly excites her sympathy for *himself*, a Greek.

brother's arms, and confess their relationship. Instead of this, she suffers him to continue talking, and to withdraw; she only reveals herself in the next scene! This is more like the dramatic treatment we find in juvenile writers, than what is expected from a great poet. Orestes has a return of his madness. He recovers from it, to feel himself purified by his sister's purity; and Pylades now suggests that they shall bear away the image, and depart together.

It is evident that the tragic situation in this story is the slaughter of a brother by a sister ignorant of a relationship perfectly known to the audience. So far from having developed the tragedy of such a situation, Goethe has scarcely touched upon it, and never once awakened our fears: from first to last we are in no suspense, our fears are untouched, our curiosity alone is excited to watch the process by which the terrible fate will be escaped. In Euripides, on the contrary, everything conspires to increase the terror of the situation. Iphigenia, formerly so mild that she wept with her victims, now rages like a lioness bereaved of her cubs. She has dreamed that Orestes is dead, and in her desolate condition resolves to wreak her woe on others. Her brother and his friend are brought before her. She questions them as to their names. Orestes refuses to tell her. In a rapid interchange of questions and answers she learns the story of her family; and then offers to save *one* of their lives on condition that the pardoned carry for her a letter to Argos. Here a contest of generosity ensues, as to who shall accept his life. Pylades is at length prevailed upon. The discovery is thus managed: Pylades, bound by his oath to deliver the letter, suggests this difficulty, viz., that should the boat be upset, or should the letter be lost, how then can he fulfil his promise? Hereupon, to anticipate such an accident, Iphigenia tells him the contents of the letter; and in

telling him reveals her name. This produces the natural cry from Orestes, who avows himself, and clasps her in his arms. The dramatic movement of this scene is admirable. From this point the interest slackens in Euripides, in Goethe it deepens. In the Greek play it is the culmination of passionate interest; for although the stratagem by which Iphigenia contrives to bear away the sacred image would flatter the propensities of the cunning Athenian audience,[1] it must have been, even to them, a delight altogether of a lower kind, addressing lower faculties, than those addressed by the tragic processional grandeur of the earlier portions; whereas in the German play, the hitherto feeble passionate interest now rises in an ascending scale of high *moral* interest, so that the tragedy evolved addresses the conscience rather than the emotions, being less the conflict of passions than the high conflict with duty.

In the fourth act Iphigenia has to save more than her brother's life; she has to save him from the Furies; this is only to be done by deceit, inasmuch as force is impossible under the circumstances. To a Greek mind nothing could be more satisfactory. The Greek *preferred* deceit to force; but the Christianised conscience revolts from deceit as cowardly and deeply immoral. Accordingly, Iphigenia shudders at the falsehood which is forced upon her, and only requires to be reminded by the king's messenger of the constant kindness and

[1] Comp. Euripides, v. 1157, sq. Iphigenia pretends that as the image of the goddess has been stained by the impure hands of the two captives, it must be purified, and for this purpose she intends to cleanse it in the sea, but that must be done in solitude. She then bids Thoas command that every citizen shall remain within doors, carefully avoiding a sight of that which may pollute them — *μυσαρὰ γὰρ τὰ τοιάδ' ἐστι*: — nay more, with an ingenuity which is almost farcical, she bids Thoas himself remain within the Temple, throwing a veil over his eyes as the captives issue forth; he is not to consider it at all singular if she is a long while absent. In this way she contrives to escape with the image, having made fools of Thoas and his guards.

consideratenes with which Thoas has treated her, to make her pause. When, therefore, Pylades arrives, urging her to flight, she communicates to him her scruples.

"*Pylades.* Him thou dost fly who would have slain thy brother.
Iphig. To me at least he hath been ever kind.
Pylades. What fate commands is not ingratitude.
Iphig. Alas! it still remains ingratitude —
Necessity alone can justify it.
Pylades. Thee before gods and men it justifies.
Iphig. But my own heart is still unsatisfied.
Pylades. Scruples too rigid are a cloak for pride.
Iphig. I cannot argue, I can only feel."

How modern all this is! Pylades with more worldly views says:

"Life teaches us
To be less strict with others than ourselves;
Thou'lt learn the lesson too. So wonderful
Is human nature, and its varied ties
Are so involved and complicate, that none
May hope to keep his inmost spirit pure,
And walk without perplexity thro' life."

Here, then, lies the tragedy. Will this soul belie its own high instincts, even for the sake of saving her brother? The alternative is horrible; and after portraying the temptation in all its force, and human frailty in all its tenderness, the poet shows us human grandeur in this fine burst from the unhappy priestess:

"Attend, O king!
A secret plot is laid; 'tis vain to ask
Touching the captives; they are gone, and seek
Their comrades, who await them on the shore.
The eldest — he whom madness lately seized,
And who is now recovered — is Orestes,
My brother! and the other, Pylades,
His early friend and faithful confidant.
From Delphi, Phœbus sent them to this shore

With a divine command to steal away
The image of Diana, and to him
Bear back the sister, promising for this
Redemption to the blood-stained matricide.
I have delivered now into thy hands
The remnants of the house of Tantalus:
Destroy us — if thou darest!"

For anything like this we seek in vain throughout the Greek "Iphigenia;" and the mere grandeur of the conception would produce an overpowering effect on the stage, if delivered with adequate depth and dignity.

Had Thoas been represented as a fierce Scythian, or even had he not been hitherto allowed to convince us of his generosity, the "collision" would have been stronger; as it is, we have little faith in his ferocity. He has nearly relented when Orestes rushes in with drawn sword to hasten Iphigenia away, because their design has been discovered. A scene ensues in which Thoas is resolved not to suffer the Image of Diana to be borne away; and as to carry it away is the object of Orestes, it must be decided by force of arms. But now a light suddenly breaks in upon Orestes, who reads the oracle in another way. Apollo said —

"'Back to Greece the sister bring,
Who in the sanctuary on Tauris' shore
Unwillingly abides; so ends the curse.'
To Phœbus' sister we applied the words,
And he referred to *thee*."

It was Iphigenia who was to purify him, and to bear *her* away is to fulfil Apollo's orders. This interpretation loosens the knot. Iphigenia recalls to Thoas his promise that she should depart if ever she could return in safety to her kindred, and he reluctantly says, "Then go!" to which she answers:

"Not so, my king; I cannot part
Without thy blessing, or in anger from thee.
Banish us not! the sacred right of guests

Still let us claim: so not eternally
Shall we be severed. Honour'd and belov'd,
As my own father was, art thou by me:
Farewell! Oh! do not turn away, but give
One kindly word of parting in return.
So shall the wind more gently swell our sails,
And from our eyes with softened anguish flow
The tears of separation. Fare thee well!
And graciously extend to me thy hand
In pledge of ancient friendship.
Thoas (*extending his hand*). Fare thee well."

This is a very touching, noble close, and is in exquisite harmony with the whole.

The remarks on this masterpiece have already occupied so much space that I could not, were I disposed, pause to examine the various collateral points of criticism which have been raised in Germany. I will merely allude to the characteristic difference between Ancient and Modern Art exhibited in the treatment of the Furies, which in Euripides are terrible Apparitions, real beings personated by actors; in Goethe they are Phantasms moving across the stage of an unhappy soul, but visible only to the inward eye; in like manner the Greek dénouement is the work of the actual interference of the goddess in person, whereas the German dénouement is a loosening of the knot by deeper insight into the meaning of the oracle.

CHAPTER III.

PROGRESS.

In the beginning of 1779 we find Goethe very active in his new official duties. He has accepted the direction of the War Department, which suddenly assumes new importance, owing to the preparations for a war. He is constantly riding about the country, and doing his utmost to alleviate the condition of the people. "Misery," he says, "becomes as prosaic and familiar to me as my own hearth, but nevertheless I do not let go my idea, and will wrestle with the unknown Angel, even should I halt upon my thigh. No man knows what I do, and with how many foes I fight to bring forth a little."

Among his undertakings may be noted an organisation of Firemen, then greatly wanted. Fires were not only numerous, but were rendered terrible by the want of any systematic service to subdue them. Goethe, who in Frankfort had rushed into the bewildered crowd, and astonished spectators by his rapid, peremptory disposition of their efforts into a system — who in Apolda and Ettersburg lent aid and command, till his eyebrows were singed and his feet were burned — naturally took it much to heart that no regular service was supplied; and he persuaded the duke to institute one.

On this (his thirtieth) birthday the duke, recognising his official services, raised him to the place of Geheimrath. "It is strange and dreamlike," writes the Frankfort burgher in his new-made honour, "that I in my

thirtieth year enter the highest place which a German citizen can reach. *On ne va jamais plus loin que quand on ne sait où l'on va*, said a great climber of this world." If he thought it strange, Weimar thought it scandalous. "The hatred of people here," writes Wieland, "against our Goethe, who has done no one any harm, has grown to such a pitch since he has been made Geheimrath, that it borders on fury." But the duke, if he heard these howls, paid no attention to them. He was more than ever with his friend. They started on the 12th of September on a little journey into Switzerland, in the strictest incognito, and with the lightest of travelling trunks. They touched at Frankfort, and stayed in the old house in the Hirschgraben, where Rath Goethe had the pride of receiving not only his son as Geheimrath, but the prince, his friend and master. Goethe's mother was, as may be imagined, in high spirits — motherly pride and housewifely pride being equally stimulated by the presence of such guests.

From Frankfort they went to Strasburg. There the recollection of Frederika irresistibly drew him to Sesenheim. In his letter to the Frau von Stein he says: "On the 25th I rode toward Sesenheim, and there found the family as I had left it eight years ago. I was welcomed in the most friendly manner. The second daughter loved me in those days better than I deserved, and more than others to whom I have given so much passion and faith. I was forced to leave her at a moment when it nearly cost her her life; she passed lightly over that episode to tell me what traces still remained of the old illness, and behaved with such exquisite delicacy and generosity from the moment that I stood before her unexpected on the threshold that I felt quite relieved. I must do her the justice to say that she made not the slightest attempt to rekindle in my bosom the cinders of love.

She led me into the arbour, and there we sat down. It was a lovely moonlight, and I inquired after every one and everything. Neighbours had spoken of me not a week ago. I found old songs which I had composed, and a carriage I had painted. We recalled many a pastime of those happy days, and I found myself as vividly conscious of all, as if I had been away only six months. The old people were frank and hearty, and thought me looking younger. I stayed the night there, and departed at dawn, leaving behind me friendly faces; so that I can now think once more of this corner of the world with comfort, and know that they are at peace with me."

There is something very touching in this interview, and in his narrative of it, forwarded to the woman he *now* loves, and who does not repay him with a love like that which he believes he has inspired in Frederika. He finds this charming girl still unmarried, and probably is not a little flattered at the thought that she still cherishes his image to the exclusion of every other. She tells him of Lenz having fallen in love with her, and is silent respecting her own share of that little episode; a silence which all can understand and few will judge harshly: the more so as her feelings toward Lenz were at that time doubtless far from tender. Besides, apart from the romance of meeting with an old lover, there was the pride and charm of thinking what a world-renowned name her lover had achieved. It was no slight thing even to have been jilted by such a man; and she must have felt that he had not behaved to her otherwise than was to have been expected under the circumstances.

On the 26th Goethe rejoined his party, and "in the afternoon I called on Lili, and found the lovely *Grasaffen*[1] with a baby of seven weeks old, her mother

[1] *Grasaffen*, *i. e.*, "green monkey," is Frankfort slang for "budding miss," and alludes to the old days when he knew Lili.

standing by. There also was I received with admiration and pleasure. I made many inquiries, and to my great delight found the good creature happily married. Her husband, from what I could learn, seems a worthy, sensible fellow, rich, well placed in the world; in short, she has everything she needs. He was absent. I stayed dinner. After dinner went with the duke to see the cathedral, and in the evening saw Paesiello's beautiful opera, 'L'Infante di Zamora.' Supped with Lili, and went away in the moonlight. The sweet emotions which accompanied me I cannot describe."

From Strasburg he went to Emmendingen, and there visited his sister's grave. Accompanied by such thoughts as these three visits must have called up, he entered Switzerland. His "Briefe aus der Schweitz," mainly composed from the letters to the Frau von Stein, will inform the curious reader of the effect these scenes produced on him; we cannot pause here in the narrative to quote from them. Enough if we mention that in Zürich he spent happy hours with Lavater, in communication of ideas and feelings: and that on his way home he composed the little opera of "Jery und Bätely," full of Swiss inspiration. In Stuttgart the duke took it into his head to visit the court, and as no presentable costume was ready, tailors had to be set in activity to furnish the tourists with the necessary clothes. They assisted at the New Year festivities of the Military Academy, and here for the first time Schiller, then twenty years of age, with the "Robbers" in his head, saw the author of "Götz" and "Werther."

It is probable that among all the figures thronging in the hall and galleries on that imposing occasion, none excited in the young ambitious student so thrilling an effect as that of the great poet, then in all the splendour of manhood, in all the lustre of an immense renown. Why has no artist chosen this for an historical picture? The pale, sickly young Schiller, in the

stiff military costume of that day, with pigtail and papillotes, with a sword by his side, and a three-cornered hat under his arm, stepping forward to kiss the coat of his sovereign duke, in grateful acknowledgment of the three prizes awarded to him for Medicine, Surgery, and Clinical Science; conscious that Goethe was looking on, and could know nothing of the genius which had gained, indeed, trivial medical prizes, but had failed to gain a prize for German composition. This pale youth and this splendid man were in a few years to become noble rivals, and immortal friends; to strive with generous emulation, and the most genuine delight in each other's prowess; presenting such an exemplar of literary friendship as the world has seldom seen. At this moment, although Schiller's eyes were intensely curious about Goethe, he was to the older poet nothing beyond a rather promising medical student.

Karl August, on their return to Frankfort, again took up his abode in the Goethe family, paying liberal attention to Frau Aja's good old Rhine wine, and privately sending her a sum of money to compensate for the unusual expenses of his visit. By the 13th January he was in Weimar once more, having spent nearly nine thousand dollars on the journey, including purchases of works of art.

Both were considerably altered to their advantage. In his Diary Goethe writes: "I feel daily that I gain more and more the confidence of people; and God grant that I may deserve it, not in the easy way, but in the way I wish. What I endure from myself and others no one sees. The best is the deep stillness in which I live *vis-à-vis* to the world, and thus win what fire and sword cannot rob me of." He was crystallising slowly; slowly gaining the complete command over himself. "I will be lord over myself. No one who cannot master himself is worthy to rule, and

only he *can* rule." But with such a temperament this mastery was not easy; wine and women's tears, he felt, were among his weaknesses:

> "Ich könnte viel glücklicher seyn,
> Gäb's nur keinen Wein
> Und keine Weiberthränen."

He could not entirely free himself from either. He was a Rhinelander, accustomed from boyhood upward to the stimulus of wine; he was a poet, never free from the fascinations of woman. But just as he was never known to lose his head with wine, so also did he never lose himself entirely to a woman: the stimulus never grew into intoxication.

One sees that his passion for the Frau von Stein continues; but it is cooling. It was necessary for him to love some one, but he was loving here in vain, and he begins to settle into a calmer affection. He is also at this time thrown more and more with Corona Schröter; and his participation in the private theatricals is not only an agreeable relaxation from the heavy pressure of official duties, but is giving him materials for "Wilhelm Meister," now in progress. "Theatricals," he says, "remain among the few things in which I still have the pleasure of a child and an artist." Herder, who had hitherto held somewhat aloof, now draws closer and closer to him, probably on account of the change which is coming over his way of life. And this intimacy with Herder awakens in him the desire to see Lessing; the projected journey to Wolfenbüttel is arrested, however, by the sad news which now arrives that the great gladiator is at peace: Lessing is dead.

Not without significance is the fact that, coincident with this change in Goethe's life, comes the passionate study of Science, a study often before taken up in desultory impatience, but now commencing with that

seriousness which is to project it as an active tendency through the remainder of his life. In an unpublished "Essay on Granite," written about this period, he says: "No one acquainted with the charm which the secrets of Nature have for man will wonder that I have quitted the circle of observations in which I have hitherto been confined, and have thrown myself with passionate delight into this new circle. I stand in no fear of the reproach that it must be a spirit of contradiction which has drawn me from the contemplation and portraiture of the human heart to that of Nature. For it will be allowed that all things are intimately connected, and that the inquiring mind is unwilling to be excluded from anything attainable. And I who have known and suffered from the perpetual agitation of feelings and opinions in myself and in others, delight in the sublime repose which is produced by contact with the great and eloquent silence of nature." He was trying to find a secure basis for his aims; it was natural he should seek a secure basis for his mind; and with such a mind that basis could only be found in the study of Nature. If it is true, as men of science sometimes declare with a sneer, that Goethe was a poet in science (which does not in the least disprove the fact that he was great in science, and made great discoveries), it is equally true that he was a scientific poet. In a future chapter we shall have to consider what his position in science truly is; for the present we merely indicate the course of his studies. Buffon's wonderful book, "Les Epoques de la Nature" — rendered antiquated now by the progress of geology, but still attractive by its style and noble thoughts — produced a profound impression on him. In Buffon, as in Spinoza, and later on, in Geoffroy St. Hilaire, he found a mode of looking at Nature which thoroughly coincided with his own, gathering many details into a poetic synthesis. Saussure, whom he had seen at

Geneva, led him to study mineralogy; and as his official duties gave him many occasions to mingle with the miners, this study acquired a practical interest, which soon grew into a passion — much to the disgust of Herder, who, with the impatience of one who thought books the chief objects of interest, was constantly mocking him for "bothering himself about stones and cabbages." To these studies must be added anatomy, and in particular osteology, which in early years had also attracted him when he attained knowledge enough to draw the heads of animals for Lavater's "Physiognomy." He now goes to Jena to study under Loder, professor of anatomy.[1] For these studies his talent, or want of talent, as a draughtsman, had further to be cultivated. To improve himself he lectures to the young men every week on the skeleton. And thus, amid serious duties and many distractions in the shape of court festivities, balls, masquerades, and theatricals, he found time for the prosecution of many and various studies. He was like Napoleon, a giant-worker, and never so happy as when at work.

"Tasso" was conceived and begun (in prose) at this time, and "Wilhelm Meister" grew under his hands, besides smaller works. But nothing was published. He lived for himself, and the small circle of friends. The public was never thought of. Indeed, the public was then jubilant in beer-houses, and scandalised in salons, at the appearance of the "Robbers;" and a certain Küttner, in publishing his "Characters of German Poets and Prose Writers" (1781), could complacently declare that the shouts of praise which intoxicated admirers had once raised for Goethe were now no longer heard. Meanwhile "Egmont" was in progress, and assuming a far different tone from that in which it was originated.

It is unnecessary to follow closely all the details,

[1] Comp. "Brief. zwischen Karl August und Goethe," i. 25, 26.

which letters abundantly furnish, of his life at this period. They will not help us to a nearer understanding of the man, and they would occupy much space. What we observe in them all is, a slow advance to a more serious and decisive plan of existence. On the 27th of May his father dies. On the 1st of June he comes to live in the town of Weimar, as more consonant with his position and avocations. The Duchess Amalia has promised to give him a part of the necessary furniture. He quits his *Gartenhaus* with regret, but makes it still his retreat for happy hours. Shortly afterward the Duchess Amalia demonstrates to him at great length the necessity of his being ennobled; the duke, according to Düntzer, not having dared to break the subject to him. In fact, since he had been for six years at court without a patent of nobility, he may perhaps have felt the "necessity" as somewhat insulting. Nevertheless, I cannot but think that the Frankfort citizen soon became reconciled to the *von* before his name; the more so as he was never remarkable for a contempt of worldly rank. Immediately afterward the President of the Kammer, Von Kalb, was suddenly dismissed from his post, and Goethe was the substitute, at first merely occupying the post *ad interim;* but not relinquishing his place in the Privy Council.

More important to us is the relation in which he stands to Karl August and the Frau von Stein. Whoever reads with proper attention the letters published in the Stein correspondence will become aware of a notable change in their relation about this time (1781–82). The tone, which had grown calmer, now rises again into passionate fervour, and every note reveals the happy lover. From the absence of her letters, and other evidence, it is impossible to assign the cause of this change with any certainty. It may have been that Corona Schröter made her jealous. It may have been that she feared to lose him. One is inclined to

suspect her of some questionable motive, because it is clear that her conduct to him was not straightforward in the beginning, and, as we shall see, became ungenerous toward the close. Whatever the motive, the fact is indubitable. In his letters may be plainly seen the extraordinary fascination she exercised over him, the deep and constant devotion he gave her, the thorough identification of her with all his thoughts and aims. A sentence or two must suffice here: "O thou best beloved! I have had all my life an ideal wish of how I would be loved, and have sought in vain its realisation in vanishing dreams; and now, when the world daily becomes clearer to me, I find this realisation in thee, and in a way which can never be lost." Again: "Dearest, what do I not owe thee? If thou didst not also love me so entirely, if thou only hadst me as a friend among others, I should still be bound to dedicate my whole existence to thee. For could I ever have renounced my errors without thy aid? When could I have looked so clearly at the world, and found myself so happy in it, before this time when I have nothing more to seek in it?" And this: "As a sweet melody raises us to heaven, so is to me thy being and thy love. I move among friends and acquaintances everywhere as if seeking thee; I find thee not, and return into my solitude."

While he was thus happy, thus settling down into clearness, the young duke, not yet having worked through the turbulence of youth, was often in discord with him. In the published correspondence may be read confirmation of what I have elsewhere learned, namely, that although during their first years of intimacy the poet stood on no etiquette in private with his sovereign, and although to the last Karl August continued the brotherly *thou*, and the most affectionate familiarity of address, yet Goethe soon began to perceive that another tone was called for on his part.

His letters become singularly formal as he grows older; at times almost unpleasantly so. The duke writes to him as to a friend, and he replies as to a sovereign.

Not that his affection diminished; but as he grew more serious, he grew more attentive to decorum. For the duchess he seems to have had a tender admiration, something of which may be read in "Tasso." Her noble, dignified, though somewhat inexpressive nature, the greatness of her heart, and delicacy of her mind, would all the more have touched him, because he knew and could sympathise with what was not perfectly happy in her life. He was often the pained witness of little domestic disagreements, and had to remonstrate with the duke on his occasional roughness.

From the letters to the Frau von Stein we gather that Goethe was gradually becoming impatient with Karl August, whose excellent qualities he cherishes while deploring his extravagances. "Enthusiastic as he is for what is good and right, he has, notwithstanding, less pleasure in it than in what is improper; it is wonderful how reasonable he can be, what insight he has, how much he knows; and yet when he sets about anything good, he must needs begin with something foolish. Unhappily, one sees it lies deep in his nature, and that the frog is made for the water even when he has lived some time on land." In the following we see that the "servile courtier" not only remonstrates with the duke, but refuses to accompany him on his journey, having on a previous journey been irritated by his manners. "Here is an epistle. If you think right, send it to the duke, speak to him, and do not spare him. I only want quiet for myself, and for him to know with whom he has to do. *You can tell him also that I have declared to you I will never travel with him again.* Do this in your own prudent, gentle way." Accordingly he lets the duke go away alone; but they seem to have come to some understanding subsequently,

and the threat was not fulfilled. Two months after, this sentence informs us of the reconciliation: "I have had a long and serious conversation with the duke. In this world, my best one, the dramatic writer has a rich harvest; and the wise say, Judge no man until you have stood in his place." Later on we find him complaining of the duke going wrong in his endeavours to do right. "God knows if he will ever learn that fireworks at midday produce no effect. I don't like always playing the pedagogue and bugbear, and from the others he asks no advice, nor does he ever tell them of his plans." Here is another glimpse: "The duchess is as amiable as possible, the duke is a good creature, and one could heartily love him if he did not trouble the intercourse of life by his manners, and did not make his friends indifferent as to what befalls him by his breakneck recklessness. It is a curious feeling, that of daily contemplating the possibility of our nearest friends breaking their necks, arms, or legs, and yet have grown quite callous to the idea!" Again: "The duke goes to Dresden. He has begged me to go with him, or at least to follow him, but I shall stay here. . . . The preparations for the Dresden journey are quite against my taste. The duke arranges them in his way, *i. e.* not always the best, and disgusts one after the other. I am quite calm, for it is not alterable, and I only rejoice that there is no kingdom for which such cards could be played often."

These are little discordant tones which must have arisen as Goethe grew more serious. The real regard he had for the duke is not injured by these occasional outbreaks. "The duke," he writes, "is guilty of many follies which I willingly forgive, remembering my own." He knows that he can at any moment put his horses to the carriage and drive away from Weimar, and this consciousness of freedom makes him contented, although he now makes up his mind that he

is destined by nature to be an author and nothing else. "I have a purer delight than ever, when I have written something which well expresses what I meant. . . ." "I am truly born to be a private man, and do not understand how fate has contrived to throw me into a ministry and into a princely family."

As he grows clearer on the true mission of his life, he also grows happier. One can imagine the strange feelings with which he would now take up "Werther," and for the first time these ten years read this product of his youth. He made some alterations in it, especially in the relation of Albert to Lotte; and introduced the episode of the peasant who commits suicide from jealousy. Schöll, in his notes to the "Stein Correspondence,"[1] has called attention to a point worthy of notice, viz., that Herder, who helped Goethe in the revision of this work, had pointed out to him the very same fault in its composition which Napoleon two and twenty years later laid his finger on; the fault, namely, of making Werther's suicide partly the consequence of frustrated ambition and partly of unrequited love — a fault which, in spite of Herder and Napoleon, in spite also of Goethe's acquiescence, I venture to think no fault at all, as will be seen when the interview with Napoleon is narrated.

[1] Vol. iii. p. 268.

END OF VOLUME I.

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